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PRICE ONE SHILLING.

LECTURES
BY THE
REV. ARTHUR MUR
To Working Men,
IN THE

FREE TRADE HALL, MANCHESTER
FIRST SERIES.

1. FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!
2. TO-MORROW.
3. BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.
4. FREEDOM.
5. SMILES AND TEARS.
6. KNOCKING AT THE DOOR.

7. HOME.
8. CROSS-ROADS.
9. WHAT AILS THEM?
10. WOMAN.
11. RED, WHITE, AND
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1862, June 7.
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duplicate given by
James Walker, D.D.

As it has been deemed desirable by many of the friends of the movement to which these Addresses refer that they should receive the permanent prominence of publication, the request has been cheerfully acceded to; not because the Lectures contain in themselves anything which will bear the test of the crucible of the critic, but in order to diffuse them among a larger number of the working classes than are able or willing to come to hear them. In committing them to the press, I may just take occasion to say, that they are not intended as models of taste or composition, but merely as rugged appeals to the hearts of the masses. As such I trust they will be received: if not, I can't help it. There are many expressions and illustrations in them which I should deem, of course, utterly unfit for the pulpit, but which I think are admissible in a familiar address to working men. I venture to think, that there is something in them which, under God's blessing, may be useful to those who live by the sweat of their brow. I therefore affectionately dedicate this book to the Working Men of Manchester, confident that at least it cannot be hurtful, and humbly trusting that it may do them good.

ARTHUR MURSELL.

Manchester, January 18th, 1858

WORKING MEN OF MANCHESTER,

As an explicit understanding is always satisfactory to all parties, I may as well open this course of Addresses by a few words of explanation.

There may be some present here this afternoon to whom it is not known that we have been in the habit, for the last three or four months, of spending an hour with working men on Sunday afternoons, in the People's Institute, Heyrod Street, Ancoats. That room, however, had at length become too small for our purpose, and numbers of the class whose interest we are most anxious to excite, viz., those who are not in the habit of attending places of worship, have frequently been obliged to go away unable to gain admission. Feeling sorry that any should be excluded who were willing to come and hear the truth, we sought to enlarge our borders, and after certain arrangements, we have managed to make our appearance here: and I cannot refrain from thanking you from my heart for having turned out in such great numbers, to prevent our looking foolish.

Though we have changed our place of meeting, and though this change will probably attract from time to time the attendance of others besides working men, it is not our intention to alter the style of these Addresses, or to attempt to adapt them any more to the taste of the fastidious, or to the maxims of the critic. They will remain essentially Lectures to Working Men. The same freedom and familiarity of illustration will be used, the same miscellaneous association of the sublime and the ridiculous—which has drawn down upon us already so much censure—will be observed; the strictures of the learned and profound will be received with the same deferential silence, and the social, moral, and religious elevation of working men will be aimed at in the same manner as before.

In the first address which it was my privilege to give before an audience of working men in Manchester, I bluntly told them what my ultimate object was. I did so, because I do not believe in any system of secrecy towards those whose real interest you seek, because I believe honesty is always appreciated by honest men, and because I did not see any reason to be ashamed of that object.

Some of my friends said, it is bad policy to let the people know too plainly all at once what it is you are aiming at, state to them in general terms that you are anxious to do them good, but don't tell them in so many words what is the definite and specific object at which you aim, or they will take the alarm and run away from you, and call you a parson in disguise.

This, however, was too deep diplomacy for my unsophisticated notions, and so in the simplicity of my heart, I told them plainly what I now tell you, that the one great ultimate object by which I am actuated in giving these addresses to working men is to induce those who are not in the habit of attending any place of worship to go to church or chapel, and hear the

Gospel; it is to prevail upon those who sneer at and despise the preachers of the truth to exercise a little more confidence in them, and show more justice to them, and not to condemn them without a hearing, and to beget, if possible, a more friendly understanding between the two generic races, starch and fustian. I do not know that the effect of this frank avowal or the simple end I had in view drew down upon me the distrust of any, or made them call me a parson in disguise. It is not a very terrible name, after all. I *am* a parson, and I glory in the name; but not a parson in disguise. I should sooner think of a king being anxious to conceal his crown, or a conqueror wishing to hide his laurels, than a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ being ashamed to proclaim his profession. And, now that I have stumbled upon this theme, let me tell you, working men, that ministers are *not* the sanctimonious, canting, mawkish maw-worms that your injustice would make them out to be, but are the truest and best friends of our fallen humanity, and, in proportion as they are faithful to their sacred trust, are the real philanthropists and the genuine benefactors of our race.

It is necessary to be a little egotistical in a first address, in order to effectuate a proper understanding between us, and though I recognise with much pleasure many old familiar faces before me, there are numbers whom I have never seen before, to whom I am anxious to introduce myself and my intentions. I am sure I don't do this from any conceited motive, for there is not a more modest, in fact, bashful, young man in Manchester, than your humble servant. I only do it so that I may get rid of myself all at once, and not have occasion to revert to such an unpleasant subject again.

With this design (not the design of committing suicide, but only that of making away with myself), I shall just repeat one other remark which I have been in the habit of making, as explanatory of my notions as to the spirit in which we should meet one another on these occasions. It is this. That I have no sympathy with the opinions of those who tell us that working men are not prepared to hear the Gospel, and that I will never be a party to fastening such a libellous insult upon their understandings and their hearts, as to suppose that, in order to secure their attention and conciliate their regard, it is necessary to insinuate with a studied dexterity the truths of the Gospel, rather than openly and directly to proclaim them. I believe this to be utterly and radically false, and shall therefore not hesitate, as occasion offers, undisguisedly, plainly, and without fear of mistake, to hurl broad-cast before the audiences which may assemble here, the truth as it is in Jesus, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. And now that I have done my best to help us to understand each other, let me during the few minutes we remain together, hide myself behind my subject.

ARTHUR MURSELL.

FIRE ! FIRE ! FIRE !

IN making use of this topic this afternoon, I propose to apply it first as an alarm, and then as a re-assurance.

Fire is a first rate thing in its way. For example, on a winter's night, what is more cheering than to nestle round it, and see its ruddy glow reflected on the children's faces, and meeting their mirthful smiles with its warm greeting, and kindly honest breath ! What sound more musical than the splitting and the crackling of the dry fagots, as the thousand sparks from the last yule log go spinning and dancing up the chimney like a domestic rocket ! What handiwork more savoury than to mix the rich comestibles, and lay them on the genial bosom of the fire, so that the first fragrance of the deviled kidney, or the bubbling rasher, as it writhes upon the gridiron, may pull the pinched and eager nose of the good man, just as he comes home for the night, and smooth off all his little ill-humours, and help to give a zest to the kiss which he imprints upon his daughter's rosy cheek, and a tenderness to the way in which he strokes little Harry's hair all over his eyes ! Even to the poor solitary bachelor, what luxury can he enjoy more refreshing than to poke the fire in his little room into a brighter flame—to light his cutty pipe—and then put one foot at one end of the mantel-piece, and the other at the other, and sitting plump before the roaring blaze, to absorb its gusts of friendly heat, and bask amidst its kindly fomentations !

Fire is useful for a thousand little purposes as well as great ones. It is by the fire that the muddled asthmatic warms his gruel—by the fire that the lover seals his billet doux—by the fire that the old dowager boils her kettle and browns her toast. In short, whenever we want to be comfortable we must raise the alarm of fire. And yet when this alarm is raised, in the startling terms of our title, it has rather a portentous sound. Many have no doubt heard the little story that is told of old Rowland Hill, at the hotel. It is related of that eccentric divine, that, during his travels in the west of England, the people at the hotel where he was staying caused him to be put into a very damp bed. He lay still for an hour or so, hoping to be able to get to sleep, notwithstanding the inconvenience and discomfort. Finding,

however, that the attempt was vain, and sleep was out of the question, the reverend gentleman sprang from his damp bed, in the dead of the night, and rushing wildly from his room, up and down the passages and corridors, he commenced shouting, "Fire! Fire! Fire!" with all his might. First one night-capped head and then another is bobbed out of various bed-room doors. "Fire! where?" cries one. "Send for the engines," shouts another. "Ring the alarm bell," roars a third. "Fire! Fire! Fire!" bellows old Rowland, still tearing up and down the house. Down comes the portly landlord, in his braces; and the landlady and chambermaids, in hysterics and no end of cap-border, all shrieking, "Where is it? Oh, we shall all be burnt to death!" and so on. Still the reverend alarmist keeps up his warning shout of "Fire! Fire! Fire!" until every lodger, and every one connected with the place, from the landlord to the ostler, are all congregated in a motley group, undressed, about the stairs, crying, "Where? where is the fire?" "Come this way," says Rowland, dragging the frightened landlord to his chamber door, followed by the terrified household. "There," says he, pointing to his damp, uncomfortable bed, "No. 14, to air the sheets!"

I have sometimes thought that this little story was not very inapplicable to the religion of some people, which seems to resemble Rowland Hill's bed, and to stand sorely in need of an airing. We ought to be able to repose comfortably on our religion, but we should get a sort of evangelical lumbago if we were to make the attempt. It wants testing or airing by the fires of a long and consistent experience, before it is fit to lie down upon composedly, and with benefit.

Fire is often used as an emblem of spiritual incidents. I have often been reminded, in looking out upon some lurid glaring furnace, as it casts its bleared reflection on the midnight sky, of those intimations which the Bible gives us of a coming day, when the earth, and sea, and all things in them, shall be burned up, and when the waters of the deepest ocean shall be lapped into the fiery throat of the fierce element, like a bubble, and be seen no more. It seems, indeed, comparing great things with small; but still there is a sort of a parallel in such scenes. It was but a few weeks ago I was travelling by a night train, through that district, on the borders of Staffordshire and Warwickshire, known in the neighbourhood as the "Black Country;" and black enough it is. If you go through it by day, your eye wanders over a vast expanse of grimy country, unrelieved by the blushing of the upspringing flower. and scarcely by the gleaming

of a single blade of grass. Vast mounds there are, indeed, but not of turf or verdure. They are swollen dusty heaps of coal, and the offal of molten iron, and the whole prospect looks like a huge grave-yard, where some grim old giants of a bygone age lie buried beneath the blackened ashes of their own victims. There is a weird, funereal air about the place, which, to a quiet looker-on, is very striking and full of mystery. Away, a few hundred yards beyond these ebon hillocks, rises a hollow-looking building as black as themselves, with a tapering chimney, like some gaunt devil with his best hat on, standing sentinel over these sable graves. Protruding from a chasm in the gabled wall is a huge iron arm, which rises and falls in measured movement up and down, as though it were thrusting heaps of victims deeper into the abyss below. And all along the sooty roofs and tiles, there range great iron-throated funnels, which belch forth volumes or black smoke, as if the infernal spirits were sleeping ten or a dozen in a bed, with their mouths wide open, and gasping out their foul and loathsome breath. Scores upon scores of half naked men, as black as Cerberus himself, are hurrying to and fro, and look like imps attendant on the slumbering demons, and the whole scene cloyes on an excitable imagination, and makes one feel as if he were in the genoral dispensary of hell itself, and that the infernal patients are all ill in bed, and waiting for a perspiration. Such is the aspect of the Black Country by day. But only see it in the night! The perspiration has set in, in awful force. The snoring demons pour from their seething throats and nostrils tongues of lurid flame. The attendant imps ply red-hot weapons busily, and warm the heated bed with glowing fuel. Potions of white-hot molten metal are poured down the yawning throats, and from the blackened hillocks streams of liquid fire run down. The swollen mounds are crested with bright flames, as though the buried giants had burst forth, and capered on their own tombs, with hair erect, and blazing with infuriate glee. There seems but one element supreme and regnant, and that element is Fire! Fire! Fire! Fire comes roaring up close round you as you sit in the train, itself impelled by fire. Fire around, and fire afar. The horizon wears a glowing belt of fire, and every object, from your own immediate neighbourhood, away to the farthest stretch of vision, is robed in the self-same fiery garb.

The Black Country! And is there no black country close about us here? Has Manchester no black country, even in her crowded streets and lanes? What makes this country that I speak of black by day and blazing red by night? What makes

the heavens look down upon it as if with a flushed and bloody scowl? Fire! Fire! Fire!

And if some pure and holy angel from above were to come and walk up Heyrod Street, and thread his way amongst the ins and outs of Ancoats, on some Saturday morning, would he not see something like this black country here? Suppose he rises with the early summer sun, and takes his round before the earliest riser is astir. The thief and libertine have sniffed the morning air, and, bashful of the light, have just skulked home to bed. Sleep is on all the town, and sits beside the pillow of the man who boasts a bed, and kisses into a brief forgetfulness the poor unfortunate who lies upon the cold damp floor of yonder cellar. How many a guilty conscience is asleep as well! Well, the angel hovers over all the scene, and as he looks upon the slumbering thousands, and reads the language of each throbbing heart, he thinks he sees in every seared and blighted conscience the blackened grave of virtue, and reads the epitaph of what the sleeper *might* have been. One by one the slumberers start up. The sodden drunkard, who sat late over his cups, begins to rub his leaden eyes as he leaps up awakened by some dream of terror. The pallid wife crawls forth to drag the dismal tenor of her blighted life through one more day of misery. But dulness, and despair, and care, are painted on almost every face; and as the angel looks in vain for his great master's image, he thinks, indeed, it is a black, black country! But why does he hover fondly over yonder hut? Is there a gleam of light or life in that dark dismal place? Yes, indeed, there is a modest flower blooming amidst all the gloom. For there, in that close chamber, is a child, and as her mild and gentle eyes greet the ascending light, she rises from her tattered bed; but ere she goes forth to her daily toil, she falls upon her knees and moves her lips, and though no sound is heard by mortal ears, the hovering angel can detect the words, "My Father, who art in Heaven." O, this is a spot to rest upon! Here is, indeed, a sunbeam breaking in even on this black country. But it is a solitary flower. It blooms alone. God keep it from the blighting influences amidst which it grows, and may it blush immortally in his own garden! Yes, it is a solitary flower, and all around is black and desolate. The night again comes round, and the angel once more flies across this black country. The streets are vocal with the noise of curses, and the cries of women bruised by the cruel blow. The gin-shop belches forth its lurid breath of revelry and riot, and the hot tongues of myriads of heedless and neglected men are blazing with oaths and roar-

ing blasphemy. Glass after glass of liquid fire streams down the scalding throats of squalid myriads, and the dialect of hell sickens the echoes with its yell, as it is spewed forth from pot-house and from pawnshop; and the fumes of perdition stifle the air of earth, and make the stars of heaven grow dim. What is it has the mastery here? What element strides rampant through this sweltering hot-bed of neglect, and waves its flaming trident over every human heart and human passion? Fire! Fire! Fire! Hell-fire has clutched its hold around men's blasted hearts. The shouts of devilry have drowned the cries of love and conscience, and every sweet endearing word of home and happiness is banished, for home is hell, and hell is home.

I ask any honest man who has taken the trouble, to help me in his own mind in drawing for himself the parallel I have just tried to sketch, whether it is an overdrawn picture? Is not this the way in which this blessed Sabbath day has been ushered in by myriads round about us; and are not these fell sounds the only Sunday bells that have pealed the matin of God's holy day upon the ears of thousands of immortal spirits?

Those who are in the habit of sitting over a huge furnace become by degrees so used to it that they scarcely feel the heat at all. In the same manner, and in a far greater degree, does this apply to those whose custom it is to trifle with their violent and evil passions, and let unbridled and distempered appetites hold sway over their hearts and minds.

I feel persuaded that if I were to make a direct appeal to any individual here, who may be in the habit of thus indulging any particular disposition to transgress the rules of morality or decency, and ask him whether he was always as comfortable in the commission of sin as he seems to be now, he would tell me no—not till he got used to it. If I were to ask the man who takes God's holy name in vain, and spices up his beastly conversation with brutal jests, and foul, revolting blasphemy, whether the oath always slipped out so glibly and so oilily, before he was tutored in this hellish grammar, he could not answer yes; but if he was an honest man, he'd say that words and oaths which once stuck in his throat and almost choked him, have at last become so familiar with the passage, that they roll out without costing him a sigh, or even a regretful thought. The fact is, he has been tampering with the fire so long that it has ceased to burn him, but has only seared and hardened his conscience, and paralyzed its influence and power. And do you really think, my friend, that you will always have this easy life in sin? Do you suppose, you miscreant wife-beater, on whose case-hardened

heart the cry of pain falls powerless, and in whose hard-baked soul the look of tenderness awakes no chord of sympathy or fond forbearance—do you suppose that God in heaven will look down on your fantastic tricks of idiotic outrage on His laws, and see the pride of your heart rise up against Him day by day, and hear the outcry of the children's blood for vengeance on your head, without treasuring against you a fearful retribution? I warn you that the day is coming when you and the Saviour, on whose blood you have trampled, will have a reckoning together. And if the fires of your own evil and unbridled passions have only served to sear and harden each source of tenderness and feeling in your heart, *another*, and a fiercer fire shall be kindled round about you, from amidst whose forked flame your relenting and unstified wail of woe shall sound unheeded and unpitied—for it is a fire that is never quenched.

You, and I, and all of us, are sailing on a stormy voyage, and we need some wary pilot on board who knows the passage, not only to preserve us from the tempest of waters from without, but from the fire within. Each heart of man is like the furnace of the potent engine that impels us through the voyage of life. If only that fire is fed by sacred fuel, our passage will be safe, and the haven will be gained. But if it is fed with the fagots of iniquity and vice—if it is left untended and unguarded—if the waves of the sea are surmounted—still there is danger and ruin from within. Apply this figure to the household of a man who lives in open enmity to God, and never tells his children of a better world, or of good things at all. The vessel may be taut and trim to look upon, the crew may be able-bodied and very decent people, and, in short, she seems bound for a prosperous voyage. The waves seem to dash with little effect upon her bulwarks; and as her sails fill to the wind, and her streamers and pennons float upon the breeze, she rides the waters like a stately bird. At length, one calm and tranquil night, when the waves are gently heaving and rocking the noble vessel on their lap; when all is still around, and those on board are calmly slumbering in their berths, a half-stiffed sleeper suddenly springs up, and shrieks the alarm of "Fire! Fire! Fire!" and ere the crew have time to rush upon the deck, the glowing element has thrown its deadly arms around the ship, and is crushing her groaning timbers in its fearful clutch. The burning vessel casts its ghastly glare upon the smooth and dimpling water, which seems to mock the raging fire by its calm repose; but ere the life-boat can be launched, or succour found, the falling masts have crushed and beaten down the hapless crew,

and the last cry of wild despair rings forth across the deep as the last burning spar sinks down into the yawning gulph.

So founders every godless household in the sea of life. It may, indeed, escape the storms of trouble, and ride softly through the tempest of business or of care; but unless the heart is right within, and guarded by the grace of God, the fires shall anon burst forth and burn it up for ever.

Let me just say a simple word to some of you family men. I am not going to take upon myself the duty of telling you how you are to bring up your children, or how you are to regulate your families; much less shall I be so presumptuous as to offer any advice to mothers as to the best quietus for a child while cutting its teeth, or to enter on the comparative claims of Godfrey's Cordial, Daffy's Elixir, or Dalby's Carminative. These important questions may be safely left to your own discretion. But what I want to urge on those who have children, is to *keep them from the fire*. If we go into a well regulated nursery, we shall probably see a high iron guard put round the fire to fence it off and keep the sportive youngsters from falling into it. Well, it is a beautiful sight to see these signs of motherly care and love. But, mothers and fathers, if you are so careful to protect your children from *this* fire, O, do try and throw some guard around them to defend them from the everlasting flame! Now, while they are young, and while their warm affections are impressible and pliant, try to direct them to the Lamb of God, whose grace alone can guard them through the storms of life, and from the fires of sin and hell. And here it may not be amiss just to put in a passing plea for Sunday Schools. I wish I could persuade the parents of some of those brawling children who congregate in our streets and courts all Sunday afternoons, doing nothing but revel in idle dissolute pastimes, which are degrading to themselves and disgraceful to their friends—I say I wish I could persuade the parents of these children just to try the experiment of sending them to the Sunday School. There are good devoted men and women there, who make it their business and their pleasure to labour and to pray for the souls of children, and who would feel encouraged in their work by having more children committed to their charge. They will teach them to read and love those things which will guard them from the ills of life, and from the snares of sin. If I address any parent who has not yet sent his child to a Sunday School, I beg him kindly to think the matter over with himself.

But let us return to our fiery theme once more. There are many fires through which you and I must pass in our journey

through this world, by which our principles and faith will be sorely tried.

The fire of affliction in all its various forms will kindle upon us. Christ himself speaks of His own mission being to send fire upon the earth. And His great herald, while standing in his garb of sackcloth, preparing in the wilderness a highway for the Lord, as he baptized the multitudes who flocked about him to hear of the Saviour whom he preached, in the rolling waters of the river, he told them of One to come who should baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire. It is true he came as a Saviour, on an errand of pure love and perfect mercy—it is true he came with the reprieve which cancelled the death-warrant under which each child of Adam lived—it is true he came with the key which unlocked the door of the dark prison-house in which mankind were all immured—it is true he came with the passport which was to appease the angel who guarded the way to the tree of life, and make him sheath his flaming sword, and change his threatening thrust into an inviting beck—it is true he brought the incense which could perfume every prayer, and send it fragrant and grateful up before the throne of God—it is true he brought the talisman which could calm the storm in every troubled heart—it is true he brought the panacea which could quell the fever or allay the leprosy of every sickening soul—it is true that every tossing wave, whether upon the restless sea, or in the still more restless caverns of human passion, sink to obedience at his word; that devils ceased to rage before his presence, and men who took delight in blood kept silence where he came—that clamour dropped her tone, and muttered mutely when he drew near—that turbulence skulked off at the far-off echo of his footstep—that discord fled his presence, and jealousy and war retreated at the first rustle of his robe or whisper of his voice. It is true that love was in his train, and peace strewed flowers in his path—that sorrow kindled into joy—that tears dried up before his smile, and heavy hearts grew light beneath the burden of his name. Yet, still he brought to earth a fire which kindled through the world, which burned in kingly hearts, and glimmered in the breasts of scribes and learned men, when first the star was seen twinkling in the east, and letting fall its rays upon the village stable, where a virgin-mother nursed an infant with glory shining round its head. That fire burned in many bosoms who stood beside the margin of the stream when John baptized him, and when the ethereal veil was withdrawn to make way for the descending dove and the heavenly voice,

"this is my beloved son." It blazed again amidst the crowd who stood around the crest of Olivet, "astonished at his doctrine," when "he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." It rankled in the hearts of jealous Pharisees, when he healed the sick upon the Sabbath day, and in the hearts of mocking Sadducees when he called them hypocrites and fools. It flushed the minds of the Roman centuries when they dragged him before Pilate's bar. It leaped within the heart of Judas when he dipped his hand into the dish, and said, "Hail, master! and kissed him." It maddened the very souls of the Jewish rabble when they hoarsely yelled, "away with him! crucify him!" It fevered the hearts of those who nailed him to the cross, who pierced his side, and spit upon him, whilst he woke the echoes of the ninth hour by the cry of, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabacthani." This fire he lighted up by his first visit to our earth. But there is another sense in which he has lighted a fire amongst men. He has kindled the fire of his Gospel—a fire not intended to scorch and to consume, but to chase from around that on which it acts, all that defiles and injures. If we bring our hearts to this fire it will warm them with a genial and suffusing glow, and cause them to leap responsive to every high and pure appeal. If we bring our consciences to it, it will purge them from dead works, and quicken them to detect and choose the precious from the vile. And everything that he offers to us for our acceptance has been purified in this same fire. "I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire." It is no bauble diadem, no tinsel crown he offers us, but has been burnished and made bright in the fire of the Great Refiner, and we may buy it "without money and without price."

But there is another fire through which we needs must pass—which He did *not* kindle—but still into which He often puts His people. This is the fire of affliction. His care over those who are passing through this fire has led the prophet to describe Him as sitting like "a refiner and purifier of silver." This is a beautiful figure. The mechanical process of refining silver is one requiring great care and nicety on the part of the operator, who sits by the furnace, intently eyeing the substance on which he is working, because, if the fire be suffered to act upon it at all too long, the effect is marred if not frustrated. He, therefore, sits ready to draw out the silver at the precise moment required, in order to subject it to the subsequent processes. In like manner does Christ sit beside the furnace of affliction, watching, with curious eye, its effect upon those who

are passing through it. He sits there eager to withdraw them from the trying ordeal when the proper moment comes. He does not sit to gloat over their pain, but to soothe it by his presence, and to allay it when its lessons have been duly learned. He sits there to see that his servants are not over-tried, and to give them comfort by his nearness to them and his sympathy with them. Let this thought, then, come to you in all its power in the day of trial, that, however fierce the flames which scorch you, Christ sits beside the fire with his eyes upon you; and if HE is there, you may be sure that it is for some good end that you are tried, and that the affliction is destined, in his own good time, to work out for you "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And is there not consolation enough in this thought! Does it not come like a cooling breeze to allay the fever of the fiercest anguish! Christ is near! Come, then, ye hottest flames of trouble and pain, and wrap me in your fierce embrace! While Christ sits by the fire, I will triumph in the midst of tribulation! Is it not worth while to languish on the bed of sickness and disease to feel that Christ is by our side! Is it not worth while to loose the pleasant lights of earth, to catch more clearly the diviner beams that mantle round Immanuel's face! Teach me, O Christ, that THOU art near me in every hour of distress, and then though the furnace glow with a seven-fold fury, I will caress its hottest and most lambent flame, if only I may feel the omnipotent support of thine everlasting arms! O, if we could but realize how much he loves us, if we could but think how much he cares for us, and be led to cast all our cares upon him! How faithful should we find him! How deep would be the wells from which we should draw living water! How tranquilly should we resign ourselves and all we loved to him; and as our hearts reminded us that he doeth all things well, our lips would give forth the feeling, "It is the Lord, let him do as seemeth him good!"

The refiner of silver has a very simple mode whereby to test the completeness of the process he performs. When he withdraws the silver from the fire, he judges of the perfection of the operation by the distinctness with which he can discern his own image reflected in the metal. If he sees it plainly mirrored there, he knows the process to be complete. It needs no words to apply the metaphor to those who have passed the furnace of affliction. You have doubtless done this for yourselves. When Christ plucks his people from the fire, he looks for his own image in every face; and in proportion as that

image may be traced, so may it be more or less emphatically said of that man, "it was good for him to be afflicted."

"He that from dross would win the precious ore,

Bends o'er the crucible an earnest eye,
The subtle, searching process to explore,
Lest the one brilliant moment should pass by
When, in the molten silver's virgin mass,
He meets his pictured face as in a glass.

• "Thus in God's furnace are His people tried;
Thrice blessed they who to the end endure !
But who the fiery trial may abide,

Who from the crucible come forth so pure
That He, whose eyes of flame look through the whole,
May see His image perfect in the soul.

"Nor with an evanescent glimpse alone,

As in that mirror the refiner's face,
But stamped with Heaven's broad signet there be shown
Immanuel's features, full of truth and grace;
And round that seal of love this motto be,
'Not for a moment—but eternity.'"

Thus, my friends, let us seek to have our trials sanctified by being brought by them near to Christ, and feeling that they have brought Christ near to us. For we make affliction heavier by rebelling against it; we only cause the fire to burn the fiercer by writhing and struggling in it, instead of meekly bearing its heat. Even Christians are too apt to forget that it is a refining fire. Let the thought that Christ has passed it without complaint or murmuring strengthen you in the hour of trial. If we would but seek help to pass it as he passed it, we should show more of his image when we emerged from it. What are our heaviest troubles to the anguish he endured on our account? O, let us, when we feel ready to complain beneath our Father's hand, think of what has been endured for us—think of the scene in the garden, and the groans that broke the stillness of Gethsemane, when its very soil was dyed with the sweat of Divine compassion—think of the damned scourge that lashed the Man of Sorrows as he bore his cross to Calvary, with the wreath of thorns upon his brow, and try to sound the awful depths of that mysterious anguish—that dense midnight of the soul that bore him down, when, wounded to the heart with our transgressions, and bruised to the inmost quick with our iniquities, he, who had done no evil, and in whom was no guile, looked vainly up for succour to his Father's frowning face, and cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Think of this, Christian! aye, let all think of it when affliction comes to you, and contrast

your trials with all this; and look from amongst the louring clouds to Jesus, trusting in his boundless love, for he never loses sight of you, and none shall pluck you from his hand. And now one word of earnest warning before we part this afternoon. My fellow-sinner, I want to say a word to you, and when I say it to you, I say it also to myself. Remember, in the name of all that is sacred, true, and holy, remember that this life is short, and that eternity shall have no end. And as you think of this, make up your mind as in the sight of a heart-searching God, whether you will prefer a few sinful pleasures now, and endless misery hereafter, or whether you will seek God's help to give up these present follies for eternal life, and joy in heaven. "Ye must be born again." I put it to you plainly, and the choice is in your own hands.

The time is coming on, with swift and sweeping wing, when all this teeming earth, with all its sights of loveliness and joy, its green fields and gardens, its blue hills and sunny landscapes, its fruitful vallies and its rich and pregnant plains, shall be wreathed in the circling caresses of the last great fires. The heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The astonished world shall be the burnt, offering to the Lord of Glory. "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof for a burnt-offering," the whole circumference of the earth must bring forth her treasures, and pour them into the crucible of Omnipotence.

You and I shall not live to see that day, but we shall be startled from our graves to look upon the sight. But if we would look upon it unmoved, out of the safe pavilion of a Saviour's hiding-place, we must prepare to meet him *now*.

While you and I are living lives of unrepented sin, we are like men standing on the turgid crater of a burning mountain. The verdure round its fevered, cracking lips, is drying up, and flowers are withering away. We may be secure for a short time longer, and the buried fires may slumber yet a little space. But O, believe me, there is beneath your feet, my fellow-sinner, a restless sea of molten lava, a burning gulph of flame. In your ears, and in God's name, I sound the alarm of Fire! The only insurance office to which you can repair is the Cross of Christ; but there, thank God, you may be safe. Oh, don't turn away and call me a ranter and an alarmist, when I cry Fire! Fire! Fire! in your hearing now. There is ground for the alarm. O, take warning while you may!

It is said of volcanos that before an eruption takes place, the wells and springs of water all dry up, and as the villagers

around find the water getting daily lower and lower in the well, and harder to procure, they take the alarm, and fly from the reach of danger. Now, my brother, I tell you again, you are standing by the parched and burning crater of a fierce volcano. The wand of justice is eager to stir up the boiling element, and make it spout forth in a fountain of unquenchable vengeance, and overwhelm your naked and defenceless soul. Satan stands glowering by, panting to lash the lambent fires into resistless fury, and only one hand interposes a shield between you and this living death—it is the hand of Christ which holds back the uplifted arm of justice, and keeps his foot upon the neck of Satan. A little longer parley, and that hand will slacken in its grasp, and that foot shall set the foeman free. Look down into the wells of earthly consolation, whence you have been wont to draw your comfort—the water is receding fast, and soon the fountain will be dry. O, take it as a warning that the fire will soon burst forth, and flee from the wrath to come! Dig other wells of comfort in a distant land, within the sight of Christ and Calvary. Fire! Fire! Fire! Once more I give you the alarm, and point you to the water of life, to extinguish its most angry flame. The springs of worldly joy are dry, and you have nothing now to quench your thirst, or lave your heated brow. Fly while yet you may to deeper wells of joy, that never can dry up. Bathe in the streamlets that course down from beneath the great white throne. Erect within your cottage walls an altar to the Lord, and as your wife and children, and yourself, surround it, on your bended knees, a bubbling and upspringing fountain shall burst forth, like the descending stream of water in the desert, at the mandate of the prophet's rod. It shall play in cooling and refreshing effluence upon your fevered head, it shall drop like summer rain upon your parched and panting heart, it shall distil like morning dew drops on your thirsty spirit, and shall quicken your enfeebled energies into new and immortal life. Do you ask again where are these joys to be found? I say, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world," for in him ye shall have life. He bids all welcome, and in his name I bid you all to come to him. Whatever else I may be charged with, none shall say I ever dared to hold back a gospel invitation from a single sinner out of hell. My master called to all, and died for all, and, as his humble messenger, I bid you welcome.

To-Morrow!

A LECTURE

BY THE REV. A. MURSELL,

IN THE

FREE TRADE HALL, NOVEMBER 8TH, 1857.

LAST Monday morning, feeling rather lazy, I threw myself into an easy chair, and began very deliberately to enumerate the engagements of the week. Now, when a man takes a little slip of paper, and writes out very neatly and carefully everything he has to do during a week—taking great pains with the dates, with the handwriting, the punctuation, and the upstrokes and downstrokes, it is a convincing proof that he is very indisposed for earnest work, and is only putting off time, by trying to persuade himself that he is getting his engagements into proper training—an ingenious little bit of self-deception, which is only dispelled by time. So it was with me at the beginning of last week. I began to think when I should begin to prepare this address. “O, that will do to-morrow,” I said to myself. Tuesday came, but to-morrow had not yet arrived; for when conscience gently suggested the propriety of setting to work, inclination rudely cried, “Pooh! to-morrow will be time enough for that.” Wednesday morning found me just preparing to begin, putting on a very loose coat, a turn-down collar, pulling off my neckerchief, and, in short, making the most elaborate preparations for doing something alarming. Just as I had got myself up as much like Lord Byron, during the operation of shaving, as anything I can think of, and was rolling up my eyes in a fine frenzy to catch the divine afflatus as it beat upon my soul, a knock at the door announced the arrival of somebody, who turned out to be an old friend and college-mate. He was rather astonished at my appearance, and asked me if I was going to fight. I told him I had too much respect for his friends to give him a good thrashing then, so I put by pen and ink, and came out with my visitor, exclaiming that my work would do

well enough to-morrow. Thursday morning came, and with it the approaching prospect of Sunday's duties ; but I was getting desperate by this time, and on the pretext of making a few *necessary calls*, (which, of course, could not possibly have been made before,) I laid aside my work once more, resolving to go at it like a Turk to-morrow. On Friday morning, instead of beginning at once, I took up a book where I read a story something like the following :—"A traveller in the back woods of Central America happened one evening to lose his way. He had penetrated somewhat deeply into one of those vast prairie-like swamps which lie upon the banks of the great American rivers. As night drew on apace, and the rising mist came wreathing up from the marshy surface of the morass, the traveller, who had expected long ere this to have reached some village or human habitation, becomes alarmed and anxious. He looks nervously around him, uncertain where to turn. At length, when he has almost given up in despair, his straining eye discerns in the far-off horizon a glimmering speck of light. His heart leaps with joy at the sign of the vicinity of human beings, and he makes straight for the light. He calculates upon reaching it in half an hour, and he walks, and sometimes *runs*, nimbly in its direction. A full half-hour has passed, but the light seems full as far off as ever ; and after an hour's tedious striving he seems no nearer. Still there it is before him, and no mistake ; and he is resolved to follow after it. It seems brighter and distincter now ; and now it begins to move. There must be some one carrying a light. He's close upon it now. 'Hillo ! there, show a light this way !' It is gone, and he can see nothing but the gloom and mist, and hear no sound except the howling wind. Poor fellow ! Tired and footsore he sits down upon the ground, and as he shiveringly awaits the blushing of the morning light, he remembers having heard in childhood of strange and dancing lights which rise upon these swamps, and decoy the pilgrim into fruitless errands, which the schoolmaster used to tell him were called *ignes fatui*—light born amongst the feculence and damp of vegetable corruption, and beckoning their deluded followers into a dangerous chase after an asylum they shall never reach." I shut up the story, for it had taught me a lesson. I thought to myself, "and is not this exactly the way in which I have been chasing after *to-morrow* ? Have not I been plodding day by day after a tantalizing phantom which has receded as fast as I have advanced, and still held out the scroll it clasps within its spectral fingers, with "*to-morrow*" blazoned on the page ? I see it now ; to-morrow is a day that

never comes; *to-day's* my time, so here goes for work before *to-morrow* makes a fool of me again.

I don't know that it is an indispensable rule of good breeding that human beings with real flesh and blood should be expected to be particularly polite and respectful to goblins, spirits, and spectres. Now, there's something in *to-day*; he's a substantial, unumistakeable sort of fellow, and ought to be treated as an honoured guest; but to-morrow's a humbug! There's no such thing as to-morrow; he is always coming, and never come; an ephemeral giant "looming in the distance;" a quack doctor, whose letters are to be addressed to the post office, and who is never at home; he rises like a ghost "to push us from our stools," and needs to be repelled in the language of the affrighted Thane:—

"Avaunt! and quit my sight. Let the earth hide thee.
Thy bones are marrowless; thy blood is cold;
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
Which thou dost glare with!"

No, let us make the most of to-day, and let the morrow take thought of the things of itself.

I promised to try to blend as well as I could the subject of "How—when and where"—which was omitted last Sunday, with the title of to-day. I don't know that this will be a particularly easy matter—but promises must not be broken. Well, *how* to do it is the first question. It is a very important question this "how?" A question which ought to be asked deliberately and honestly, before any great step is taken; a question which cannot be considered too often or too deeply. The consequences of its too-hasty or ill-judged consideration may result in the entire failure of an important scheme. Look at the instances we have had of this lately. A few weeks ago, a mighty idea was conceived of laying an electric wire beneath the Atlantic Ocean, to enable John Bull to whisper into Brother Jonathan's ear three thousand miles off, and to give Premier Palmerston and President Buchanan the opportunity of playing their diplomatic cards without getting sea-sick. Of course the question arose—how is this to be done? and clever men began to lay their heads together to hit upon a plan. The plan was resolved upon, and away they sail, with the cable running out at the ship's stern like an interminable tail; but some 500 miles from land snap goes the cable, and the experiment has failed, and John Bull and Jonathan are as far apart as eyer. Again, the other day, the papers were full of suggestions as to *how* the Great Eastern steamer should be

launched and you could not cast your eye down a column of the *Examiner* and *Times* without a bewildering vocabulary of technicalities taking away your breath as you read of "flanges," and "cradles," and "worms," and "axles," and "pulleys," and what not. It was but three days ago the apparatus was set to work, and instead of launching the Great Eastern into the water, it launched one or two men into eternity, and four or five families into bereavement and poverty, by twirling the heads of these families up into the air, and cracking their skulls against the ground. Here, then, we see again the importance of rightly considering *how* to do a thing before setting about it.

But you will say, we are not here to listen to suggestions about laying the Atlantic cable, or launching the Great Eastern steamer; we want to know how to make home happy here, and how to find a happy home hereafter. Well, in trying to answer the question, how are you to make home happy here? I would say don't live in the light of *to-morrow*, but make the most of that of *to-day*. One would have thought it almost impossible for a man in his sober senses, who knows the means of attaining happiness, to stop to ask *when* he is to put these means into practice. A certain working-man, who shall be nameless, knows well enough that intemperance, licentiousness, or improvidence, are the secret of the misery of his home and the desolation of his family. He says to himself, I will reform these habits—I will renounce my vices—and will turn over a new leaf. But he is always taking just a farewell glass, or taking a farewell oath, or giving his wife a final black eye, previous to beginning the reformation of "*to-morrow*." He makes up his mind to amend, and then he asks himself *when* shall I begin? and he resolves day by day to begin *to-morrow*. Let me ask, how many here amongst us now have fixed upon *to-morrow* as the beginning of a new life? My friends, is it possible that you can deliberately contemplate the results of your dissoluteness and profligacy! Is it possible that you can feel the aspic pang of remorse striking to your heart while you look upon a haggard wife, on hungry children, on an empty cupboard, and a fireless hearth, and put off till *to-morrow* the utterance of the tender word which might call up a smile into that pallid face, or the exertion of the manly effort which would feed those hungry children and illumine that chilly hearth! I wish I could take my stand now upon the threshold of some drunkard's cottage—could lay my hand upon his shoulder—could point him to his pining wife, all scarred and livid with his brutal blows—could show to him the hollow-eyed baby that hangs upon her breast,

and the slatternly little starvelings that huddle half-naked in the room. If I could but touch some gentler chord in his rugged nature, I would beseech him, by the blenching of that hectic cheek, and eloquent but mute reproach of that bruised bosom, by the sickly vacancy of that baby's stare, and by the incipient hell that was festering in the youthful bosoms of those boys and girls—to disentomb his heart and his affections from the family vaults at the Blue Boar, and enshrine them on the sacred altar of a happy home. And if, by a simple exhortation of this kind I could be helped by God to let in a ray of love or hope into some cottage blasted by distress and pain, there would be a reward in the result more rich than gold, and a recompense in the mother's blessing and the wife's "thank God," sweeter and more precious than a throne of rubies!

There are some present now who, I dare say, are not very familiar with some of the dark spots which lie around them in this great working hive in which we live. As a stimulus to those who have feeling and earnest hearts to bestir themselves on behalf of sinful and suffering humanity, as well as a salutary warning to those who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, I shall so far forget my title, for a minute, as to attempt a description of a drunkard's home; and I fear it will be only too faithful a type of many houses in our own city. I don't do this from any desire to exaggerate or bring too prominently forward the poor man's faults—for rich men get drunk as well as poor—but they are not snatched from their homes and fined and imprisoned like the poor; they do their debauchery snugly at home, where no one sees them, and appear next day with a clean shirt and choker, as though nothing at all had happened—thanks to the soothing influences of Schweppe's Soda Water, or Messrs. Jewsbury and Brown's Lemonade.—No, I don't want to make too much of the poor man's faults—for

"I must confess that I abhor and shrink
From schemes with a religious willy, nilly,
That frown upon St. Giles's sins, but blink
The peccadilloes of all Piccadilly.
My soul revolts at such hypocrisy,
And will not, dare not, fancy in accord
The Lord of Hosts, with an exclusive lord
Of this world's aristocracy.
It will not own a notion so unholy,
As thinking that the rich by easy trips
May get to heaven—whereas the poor and lowly
Must work their passage as they do in ships.

One place there is—beneath the burial sod;
 Where all mankind are equalized by death.
 Another place there is—the Fane of God,
 Where all are equal who draw living breath.
 Juggle who will—elsewhere with his own soul,
 Playing the Judas with a temporal dole,
 He who can come within that awful cope,
 In the dread presence of a Maker just,
 Who metes to every pinch of human dust
 One equal measure of immortal hope,
 He who can stand beneath that holy door,
 With soul unbowed by heaven's pure spirit-level,
 And frame unequal laws for rich and poor,
 Might sit for hell and represent the devil."

But although I would not exaggerate or misrepresent the errors of the working man I would not hesitate to make a fair description of his self-imposed miseries. In an audience like this it is more than probable that there may be one or two whose potatoes are somewhat deeper than they need be, and who spend at the sign of the "Hen and Chickens" abroad the money which ought to be devoted to the comfort of the hen and chickens at home. It is just possible I may speak to some drunken father or some dissolute husband, and if I do so, I do not think that this description of his home and prospects is likely to be very wide of the mark. It is a small cottage, thinly furnished, and the furniture, like the wife, seems wasting away. Half of it is at the pawnshop, and it is all gently sinking into the same vortex. He has a wife and only daughter, a fair child of fifteen years, just budding into life. Cruelty and hard usage, together with starvation, have told their tale upon the mother's form and face, and when the lord and master of the house comes staggering home at midnight, he finds that they have stretched her dying on the tattered bed; the daughter's tearful face is hidden in her mother's bosom, and her thin white hands are clasped about her neck. The conscience-stricken sot stands rooted on the threshold, and stays his staggering feet by grasping at the door-post, and as he glares with bloodshot eyes upon the death-bed that his selfishness prepared, he hears his daughter's sobbing voice exclaim, "Thy will be done!" and then his gasping wife sighs forth the struggling prayer, "Lord, lay not this sin to his charge;" and as the dying intercession floats from that broken heart to heaven the spirit leaves its clay and follows it, and the father is alone with his orphan daughter. Bitterly, oh, bitterly, did he weep as he looked upon the mortal remnant of that patient partner of his life, so still, so cold, so marble white! He would have madly

tried to warm the bosom back to life, but his child withdrew him from the bed, because she knew that that bosom bore the mark of a foul, savage blow, and she did not want that blow to recoil upon her father's heart. The night rolled slowly by, and the morning sun fell full upon the upturned face of death, and as the drunkard looked towards it then, he saw that the love-light had not faded from the glassy eyeballs even yet. Another day and night and it is time to take a last fond look before the coffin-lid shall shut the vision out for ever, and a sad, sad look it was. A parting pressure of those marble lips, and a hot tear upon the cheek, and then the daughter comes to place a lily in the bosom, and twine a sweet white rose within the raven hair, and then amidst the tolling of the passing bell and the tramping of the black procession, the scene is closed. But oh, the weary, weary hours of remorse which prey upon the widower when left alone! His life is insupportable; what shall he do, what cordial panacea can quell his fears, and soothe this torturing reflection? His child creeps softly to his side and lays an open book upon his knees, from which she whispers in his ears, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." The words seem to revive him for a moment, as he again asks, "What shall I do?" "Prayer is the best cordial for a wounded spirit, father," says his child; "my mother taught me that." "Prayer! what is prayer?" "I'll *try* to pray, at all events," he says; and he turns to fall upon his knees; but all at once a cold and nervous tremor chills his veins, and he turns round again and says, "No; I'll pray *to-morrow*—I can't pray now—give me my hat!" The door has swung upon its hinges, and he is in the street. The daughter follows to the door, and watches him as he goes down the pavement, till he turns into a house. She follows quickly after him, and gets there just in time to hear him call hoarsely for some brandy. Down on her knees she begs him, by the memory of the loved and lost, for pity's sake to come away; but he thrusts her out, and tells her to begone. Arrived at home, she kneels once more, not now before an earthly but a Heavenly Father; she prays for help to lead her only relative from ruin into peace. The clock strikes ten—eleven—twelve—one—two and three, before the shuffling footstep can be heard against the door, and then it is opened by the strange hand of some ruffian companion, who has helped her father to get home. He gives his drunken charge into her care, with many a coarse and brutal jest, and leaves them alone. His glaring eye happens to rest upon the open Bible he had set aside, and as his child laid her trembling hand upon his breast his tears once more gushed

forth, like the water from the rock beneath the prophet's rod. But, oh ! it is a too-late repentance. Next day he dives down to his hell again, to drown his grief in streams of liquid fire. And while he is away, another shadow darkens the threshold of his house, and the poor orphaned girl is listening to the glib and slippery flatteries of some deceitful libertine, and the chaste casket of her fame is in peril of being ransacked of its pearly jewel—virtue. Day after day the father rolls home with his legion of evil spirits revelling in his heart, and day after day the plastic visitor comes with the velvet touch of his soft hand, and foul cajolery of his dainty lips. Is it any wonder that she should, in her unguarded and untended innocence, with the bleeding tendrils of her trusting heart trembling to twine around some true support, with every fibre of her woman's soul torn from the objects that should win its love ! Is it a wonder, I repeat, that she should fall beneath the wicked wizardry of the seducer's sorceries, and sink from innocence to be the prey of the libertine, and the toy of the destroyer ! And on whose head—O, drunkard ! on whose head, O beast, miscalled a man, shall her blood most heavily descend ! Yes ! let the thought torture thee—let it lash thee as with a whip of scorpions, and lacerate thy very soul with its envenomed smart. You killed your wife with your own selfish, beastly appetite ; and you have worse than killed your daughter ! After a long, long absence, which you have filled up by puling about your pretty Jane, she comes back to your roof, dishonoured and abandoned, and as you stretch your arms to fold her to your heart, she laughs a hoarse and gipsy laugh—a weird and hollow sound—in which you cannot recognize those tones that read the Bible in your ear, and called on you to pray. You look upon the face, but it is not the same ;—the blushes, once so modest, have faded from the cheek like withered flowers, and brazen stolid insolence is mantling in its place. What wonder—hell-babe !—what wonder, that upon some bleak and stormy night, she hurls herself from the dark parapet of the bridge, and seeks a refuge from the cold and sluggish earth in the colder and more sluggish water ! Drowned ! yes, drowned ! and gone into eternity before you—a ministering spirit to usher you to hell. Don't you remember when her trembling finger pointed you to heaven, and when it traced the lines that spake of Him who was the way, the truth, and the life ? But you would not follow it, and you have not only turned away yourself, but have strewed blasting ashes on her flowery path. O, be not surprised to see, as you are hurried through the ebon corridors of the nether world, the pallid

phantom of that child whose early love would, had you cherished it, have lifted your hopes and thoughts to heaven, laughing to see you writhing in the lake of fire. O, fathers, be tender to your children, and be jealous of your daughter's loves! Guard their honour as you would guard your life. Never uplift a recreant hand against a woman's breast, for that man is a monster who can bruise with a miscreant's blow that tender bosom, or terrify with a coward's curse that angel presence. If there is a man whose soul is so dead to what is manly and human as to dare to lift a lawless arm against a woman's form, I'd cry aloud to heaven

"To put in every honest hand a whip
To lash the scoundrel naked through the world."

But we hinted about saying a word in answer to the question, "How shall we secure a happy home hereafter?" Some of us make ourselves so much at home here that we don't trouble ourselves to think of an hereafter at all. But this is the *to-morrow* after which we must reach, and in preparation for which we must make the most of *to-day*. There are hundreds, perhaps, of these spectral *to-morrows* which never come, dividing us from this substantial *to-morrow* which awaits us all. But we must overlook all these, and let them pass like the weird ghosts of Banquo's issue, and become real as they merge into *to-day*. All these *to-morrows* are to us mere spectres; they are only tangible to us as they become *to-days*. "Boast not thyself, then, of *to-morrow*."

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing!"

The way, then, to secure a happy home hereafter, or, in other words, the way to spend a happy *to-morrow* beyond the grave, is to make the most of *to-day*. And the way to make the most of *to-day*, is at once to come to the cross of Jesus Christ, and there confess and leave our sins. If there is any working man who is asking this question of himself, I would bid him listen to his own conscience, which is loudly telling him to cultivate habits of communion with God—which is telling him to let his

prayers before the mercy-seat float up with the effluence of the morning light, and mingle with the incense of the evening shade—which is urging him to read the Bible, which tells him how to pray, and what to pray for—which is beckoning him to saunter into the house of God, to sing His praises, and to hear His Word. I would bid him read and believe the exceeding great and precious promises, which tell the guiltiest of our race that he has a Saviour in the man Christ Jesus, and an unfailing asylum, from which no human bigotry can exclude him, in the cross of Calvary. I know that conscience has spoken these lessons to many a man who has not listened to them yet. I know that it is whispering them into many ears even now. But conscience is put off with so many little shifts and evasions that we often quench or stifle her voice. This is bad treatment of a good friend. Conscience is treated like some troublesome creditor who duns us with his bill, and we are perpetually promising to pay his demands *to-morrow*. My friends, you surely cannot be so infatuated as to ask when you are to begin to seek God's great salvation! It is not a bill you have to pay, but a gift Christ is waiting to bestow, and yet you put him off with your everlasting *to-morrow*. Can you do this, with hearses with their sable plumes rumbling and trailing every hour through the streets—with cemeteries and grave-yards paved with brothers, sisters, mothers, and children—with the vivid recollection of some death-bed warning, or the stiffening and clammy grasp of a dying hand about your neck? Can you do *this*? Can you talk about *to-morrow*, with the echo of some dead child's voice ringing in your ears the word *to-day*? Can you do this with the kiss of a cold lip still printed and stereotyped upon your face, or the dying glance of the glazing eye of friendship photographed upon the mirror of your mind? Can you do this in the face of all the warnings of the Bible, and amidst the thunders of the mount unhushed, and the uncurbed vengeance of its forked lightnings blazing damnation in your very face? Can you do this in foul contempt of all the overtures of love, and all the calls of grace? While Christ is crying, "to-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts," can you still persist in crying out, "to-morrow?" While God is bidding you to come *now*, and reason with Him, can you yet keep puling about to-morrow? O no; come *now*, "for *now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation!" It was well said by an old divine that "hell is paved with good resolutions." Every unfulfilled resolve is but a repetition of this incessant plea of *to-morrow*; it is but a re-invocation of the unreal phantom

that is ever luring us on, but ever fleeing from us ; and that phantom shall be the tormenting spirit that shall taunt us with our cold reluctance, through the cycles of eternal woe ! O, my brother youth, let not your warm affections freeze against the earnest overtures of love ! Remember that the premature eclipse *may* come, and dim the rising beam of the morning sunlight of your life, and plunge it in an overcast horizon.

Pause here and think ; a monitory rhyme
 Demands one moment of thy fleeting time.
 Consult life's silent clock—thy bounding vein—
 Seems it to say—"Health here has long to reign."
 Hast thou the vigour of thy youth, an eye
 That beams delight, a heart untaught to sigh ?
 Yet fear, youth oft-times healthful and at ease,
 Anticipates a day it never sees ;
 And many a darkened sepulchre aloud
 Exclaims—"Prepare thee for an early shroud !"

Ye men of middle age, who toil in all the heat and burden of the day, boast not of strength or stalwart manhood, for that meridian sun that blazes overhead may drop down from its zenith, even in its most effulgent blush, and merge its dazzling radiance into dismal gloom. And you, ye sires and sages, whose hoar and frosty locks remind you of an opening tomb, I would fain venture a word to you. Father, your eyes are dim and heavy, but clasp your hand in mine, and I will try, by God's help, even yet to lead thee into hope and daylight. I will sit at your feet in all things else ; but I have seen a vision, and I long for you to see it too. The sun is setting fast, but still it casts its falling beams upon the picture. O, let me lead you as a child would gently lead his feeble and decrepit father, to the place from whence you may behold the sight.

"*There* is a fountain filled with blood,
 Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

There is a beaming mercy-seat, with seraph wings outspread, and angel-fingers beckoning. And *there* is a cross all purple with the rich and precious streams—and still vocal with the gasping cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do !"

That fountain is still open
 That mercy-seat is still welcome,
 And that cross still stands visible and plain.

Now, look upon the clock of time. The hand points to the twelfth hour on the dial, and verges closer and closer to the stroke. You may hear the hollow and portentous tick of destiny, and soon the hour shall ring. O, then, come *to-day* to the fountain, the mercy-seat, and the cross, and you shall not be cast out, but all your sins shall be forgiven, the past shall be forgotten, "*to-day* shalt thou be with Him in paradise," and your hoary head shall be your crown of glory.

And now, a parting word to all, in reference to the great *to-morrow*, which awaits each one of us. It is a morrow fraught with tremendous destinies; a morrow, whose disclosures shall reverse the attitude of many from the posture which they hold before the world. But it will be a morrow full of glory and of extacy, and lighted with the radiance of an unsetting sun. To those who long to see the triumphs of the gospel in the earth, and the harvest-home of truth celebrated, these are hard times in which we live. What with heathens, heretics, and Antinomians retarding the light, the day of jubilee seems a long way off, the *morrow* of the world's redemption is a long time coming. Would it not come faster if we were more zealous in our efforts, more fervent in our love, more earnest in our prayers? Our Saviour taught us all to pray, "Thy kingdom come." I wish we profited by the lesson more. But I say these seem hard times for the cause of truth. Dark scenes are going on around us, even in the shadow of our churches and our chapel walls. This city of Manchester, in which we live, with all its wealth, with all its intelligence, with all its sanctuaries and schools, with its Art Treasures Exhibition, and with its public parks and gardens, this city of Manchester, in which we live, has many a breeding hell within it, from whose deep moral gloom the cries of dying souls festering in suicidal guilt float up before the Lord God of Sabaoth, and form the odious incense of a sin-plagued charnel-house. There are a few "*fanatical*" and "*vulgar*" men who have sometimes so far lost the sense of what is due to "*dignity and self-respect*" as to try to imitate the good Samaritan, in reaching forth a helping hand to needy souls and bodies, who could lift up a curtain and show a Christian public phantoms of despair and human freights of wretchedness and crime, sinking unmourned, except by heavenly angels, into hell-fire, while Satan hugs himself in glee and laughs. Yes, there are cauldrons of enormity reeking around the dwellings of our squires, and dons and grandees, from which curl forth the steaming fumes of an incipient perdition, and night by night, beneath the twinkling stars of heaven, a hecatomb of horror is enacted which the

powers of darkness blush to look upon. These seem dark omens for the cause of truth; but still the glorious "*to-morrow*" shall anon begin to dawn; and if man will not labour in God's hands to bring it on, God will accomplish it without him. Go to the distant nations of the world, and everywhere some gaunt and gorgon superstition holds the soul in slavery. Go out to bloody India, and watch the creatures whom our common God *once* made in his own image, bathing their recreant hands in beauty's blood; look at them toss the naked babies in the air, and catch them quivering on the bristling spear! Behold the carnival of lust and cruelty! Look at the city streets all slippery with innocent blood, and at the wild flowers soaked in the crimson tide. The virgin lilies redden in the scarlet flood, and where the morning dew-drop *ought* to twinkle, there hangs the purpling gore of butchered infancy and slaughtered loveliness. Aye, look at *these* things ye who long for the blushing of the bright "*to-morrow*," and let your heart cry loud to God, "Thy kingdom come!" Great God, Thy people wait for Thy coming! O "rend Thy heavens and come down," and cause the wrath of man to cease, that the wilderness and the solitary place may be made glad, and the desert may rejoice and blossom as the rose!

Far, far away in the dim horizon the bloodshot eye of faith may even now descry a fringing streak of amber-light above the "heaven-kissing" hills. God's waiting church is mustering on all her watch-towers, and before the rising breath of earnest prayer the floating vapours are dispersing. "Thy kingdom come." Behold, the light is spreading! It is throwing a fair mantle over distant China, and unaccustomed eyes are lifted up to heaven. "Thy kingdom come!" The rays are stretching over sable Africa, and her swarthy sons are breaking off their chains, and revelling in a heaven-born liberty. And, turn again to India—that darkened theatre of death—all glowing beneath the effluence of the gathering day. "Thy kingdom come." The tide of glory rises higher yet—it is full upon the flow. Wave after wave of gospel light is dashing on the golden strand; and, as each crested billow breaks upon the shore some leprous devotee leaps forth, all washed and purified, and shouts aloud, "Hosanna to the Lamb!" "Thy kingdom come." North, south, and east and west are wreathed in sunshine, and the hovering clouds have vanished from the sky, and the last grim shadow has been chased away. The looked-for morrow has at length arrived! Poverty and pain have ceased their wail—complaints and quarrels are now heard no more. War has been vanquished by the smile of peace, and tyranny has been appeased by love

and mercy. All men are brothers, and all claim kindred to a common Father. "The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdom of our God, and of His Christ." Hark, how the myriad hymns of praise unite, while all the myriad minstrels summer in the sunshine of the gospel of salvation!" Listen to the swelling tide of song, as fresh anthems of thanksgiving rise like choral incense to the throne of God; and as you catch the cadence of the rolling numbers, launch forth *your* voice upon the surging ocean of extatic praise! Hallelujah! for Christ has got the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possessions. Hallelujah! for millennial days have dawned upon us, and Satan is enchained within his dark domain. Hallelujah! for the cross has triumphed over death and hell, and the Prince of Peace hath gotten Him the victory. Hallelujah! for slavery and sin are dragged, disarmed and vanquished, at the chariot-wheels of the crucified Nazarene. Hallelujah! for the throne is decked with the spoils of gospel victories, and all nations shall call the Saviour blessed. "Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

I cannot part from you this afternoon without adding a word of earnest exhortation, or at least of making an attempt to stimulate the aspirations of those who are neither anxious nor prepared for this bright *morrow*. I must let my last words be words of encouragement to the timorous, and of entreaty to the obdurate. There may be some who are bewailing sin, but who are deterred by the rehearsal of the long catalogue of their crimes from coming now to Christ. O, fling away despondency! There is no passage in God's holy book which forbids any contrite prodigal to come to the cross. No, but the invitations to lay hold on eternal life, the overtures to the wanderer to return, and the promises to the suppliant of a free salvation, stream down from every page like floods of milk and honey. O, take these invitations, then! Do you suppose the spirit and the bride are saying "come," just to bring you to the door and then to dash it in your face? Away with such a foul aspersion on the love of Christ! I tell you the fountain is still open, the invitation is still free, and in the name of him whose streaming veins supply that fountain with its crimson tide, I call upon each fallen child of sin to come. Come, ye weary and ye heavy laden, and have your chains unclasped, and leap unfettered in the noon-day sun. Come, ye sick and leprous, and baptize your fainting souls beneath *this* flood, and "be strong in the Lord and the power of His might." Come, ye down-trodden and ye abject sons or want, and be enriched with the dower and the heritage of the

sons of God. Come, ye famished and ye hungry pilgrims, and feed upon the bread that cometh down from Heaven. Come, ye panting and ye thirsty souls, parched with the feverish heats of earth and hell, and take the water of life freely. Come to the open door, come to the open fountain, come to the open arms. Ye helpless gropers in the gloom of death and of despair, avert your downcast eyes from things beneath your feet, and fix them upwards on the beaming glory where the seraphs dip their soaring wings, and where the minstrels praise and sing. Ye tearful mourners at the funeral urn of hope, break off your doleful sighs, and clothe yourselves in airy garments, whilst you shout hosannas to the Lamb that was slain, for blazing skies are opening with their pearly thrones, and heavenly fingers beckon you to come, and angel voices tell you that life and immortality are brought to light. O, talk no more of death! for "death is swallowed up in victory." Victory! for the sacrifice has been offered, the pardon ratified, and the salvation sealed. Victory! for the cross has triumphed over death and hell, and Christ the victim is now Christ the victor. Victory! for our Immanuel has led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. Victory! It is the language of a choral heaven, and the responsive echo of a waiting church. Victory! It rolls along the archives of the skies, and is caught up by the battling armies of the living God on earth. Victory! It has been the certain watchword of the faithful in all time—and will be the exultant cry of the redeemed through all eternity. Victory! It is the shout of angels from on high when a suppliant rebel seeks the closet with a broken and a contrite heart. Victory! It is the anthem of that suppliant when he rises with that broken heart bound up, and with the peace that passeth understanding kissing his soul to rest. Victory! It is the motto on the radiant banner which the waiting angels wave over the bed of pain and death, when the spirit of the expiring saint is gasping to be free; and it shall be *your* cry too, my poor desponding brother, if you will but lay aside your shivering doubts, and come to Jesus and his cross. You may be groping in gloom, and stumbling in thick and gathering darkness, but take hold of the rod and the staff of your Great Elder Brother, lean all your weight upon it. Plod sturdily up the steep and rugged hill; you shall, ere long, gain the summit. Do you not even now already feel the early morning breezes fanning upon your brow? The mountain-top is gained, and as you kneel beneath the grey and misty sky you brush the dew-drop from the opening heather-bell. The haze grows less and less intense, and gently curls away over the valleys, as the glow-

ing east smiles forth the promise of a rising sun ! And now the orient orb unveils its beaming radiance, and floods the wide-spread prospect with effulgent light ; and in that blissful effluence from the Godhead's throne you look back upon the discipline through which you have been led, while night was heavy on your soul, and in each footprint there are signs of mercy ; for, beside the precipice, and jagged, overhanging rock there are *other* footprints than your own—you have not walked alone—those footsteps have gone nearer to the edge than yours, and there's not a single peril amidst which you've passed, but that companion has attended you, and even now, that you have been conducted out of darkness into all this marvellous light, you can see to read your Saviour's promise—"When thou passest through the fire it shall not consume thee, and through the water it shall not overflow thee ; and lo ! *I* am with thee alway—even to the end of the world." O distrust no more the hand that leads, or the heart that loves ; but now, amidst the emanation of this fresh daybreak of your spirit's life, pour out your grateful soul like early incense to the Lord, while all around the morning stars sing together, and the sons of God are shouting for joy !

Better Late than Never!

A LECTURE

BY THE REV. A. MURSELL,

IN THE

FREE TRADE HALL, NOVEMBER 15TH, 1857.

LET me spend the half hour, which we hope to enjoy together this afternoon, in trying to urge you all to be men of business—not to spend all your energies on cotton, and in trying to get money—but in trying to get happiness, and the happiness which will last the longest. The title we have chosen reminds us that time is short, but still our happiness need not be short, for our best happiness begins its date beyond the grave.

I have thought of two texts in the Bible which, I think, ought, one of them, to remind us of the flight of time, and the other to urge us to improve it. The first is this:—"And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that therein are, that there should be time no longer."

The events of daily life are, in a general way, so even and monotonous that it requires something unusual to startle us from the apathy in which we spend our time. We get so used to the routine of events that we fancy that we shall live for ever, and that no interruption to our pursuits awaits us. It needs these recurring seasons to wake even the church of Christ to effort. The reason why our efforts for the spread of Christ's kingdom are not more efficient and successful, is that we suffer ourselves to forget the end at which we are striving, and put ourselves, like religious hacks, in a sort of moral harness, and then, with a dogged sense of duty and responsibility, begin to grind away at an evangelical treadmill, without stimulating our zeal, and quickening our devotion, by a forward glance

towards the prize of our high calling, or a joyous foretaste of our great reward. The want of adequate motives and incentives, is the secret of failure in many of the schemes of men. This cannot, however, be the reason of any failure on our part, in any department of Christian exertion. There is no absence of incentive, no lack of motive to complain of here. The prospect of the hastening end of time, with its rewards and punishments, with its crown of life and its sentence of death, even if there were no other and nobler incentives, would surely be sufficient to inflame our holy ambition on the one hand, and a wholesome dread on the other. How, then, with these and a thousand other sources of encouragement and warning, how is it that Christian zeal so often flags, and Christian effort grows supine? The secret seems to lie not in the want of the motive, but in the forgetfulness of it. We do not let the legitimate incentives to action have their legitimately inciting effect upon us. True, the formula of the work is gone through—public ordinances are duly observed—Sabbath school agency is maintained—home and foreign missionary effort is put forth—but the work is prosecuted with a sort of humdrum monotony of spirit; there is none of the elasticity of soul which gives to each recurring opportunity of effecting good, a new zest and charm. The incentives are there, and are theoretically acknowledged and obeyed, but they are not practically admitted to play, in all their reviving power, on the jaded spirit. We work because we have been in the habit of doing so, not because we are touched by sympathy, or animated by a prospect of a crown of life. We put forth our efforts to ease our consciences, or to spend our time, and not because these consciences will soon be all that is left of us, and ere long time shall be no more. We get so absorbed in the work itself that we perform it sluggishly, and lose sight of the end after which we strive. Just as some men of business, who have laboured for years after the accumulation of a fortune, have on retiring upon that fortune, when obtained, actually died for the want of their old pursuits—having completely absorbed their desire for the end, in the habitual engrossment of the application of the means.

Thus we see that success in Christian effort, or indeed in any effort, depends upon bearing in mind the cause in which we labour, and the guerdon after which we strive. The merchant who strives for riches, makes all subservient to his end, and holds the object of his ambition ever before him. The warrior who struggles for glory, makes it his battle-cry in every attack, and the rallying word in every charge. Had Columbus for a moment forgotten

the darling object of his great enterprise, the vast western continent might yet have been unknown to us, and instead of being the cradle of a new-born civilization, and the home of Christ's religion, might still have had its unshorn prairies echoing with the barbarian's yell, and its shores glaring with the unholy fire of superstitious rites. The racer on the course ever stretches towards the goal with earnest effort. Now, in the Christian course, the starting post and the goal are the same—we start from the cross, and we come in at the cross. That cross is nearer to its ultimate triumphs than it was before. What have we done to push those triumphs? Let us draw fresh hope and animation from it, ere we set forth again; and again starting from this self-same cross, let us in all our future race be increasingly impelled to effort by the recollection of it. Let us try to pick up stragglers on the way, and bring them to it, ere we come round again. Let us be ever looking unto Jesus, the *author* and *finisher* of our faith.

We cannot pause to discuss this verse in a methodical and consecutive mode. It certainly offers a most tempting opportunity to the imagination to dwell upon the magnificence and grandeur of the vision, to the emotion to linger in the contemplation of the solemnity and sublimity of the oath, and to the mind to pause over the importance and the awfulness of the asseveration. But we must deny ourselves this opportunity of an excursion into the sublime, and try to bend our thoughts upon the simple lesson which the words contain. It is a *very* simple lesson—the value and importance of time—the purposes for which it is given—the objects to be attached to its right use—and our duty to improve it as our best possession, our most precious wealth, as the casket which contains the element of eternity, and as the fecund and upspringing seed of a coming immortality. I can simply throw out these lessons without any enlargement, and leave the eloquence of the scene described to produce its own effect upon your imaginations, and the solemnity of the moral it contains to speak its own warning to your hearts.

To assist your own private reflections upon this theme (and it is more a subject for private thought than for public exercitation), suffer me to point out, and then leave them with yourselves, three plain considerations, which are, directly or indirectly, suggested in the text.

It first implies that time actually exists. The present moment is our own, and *all* that we can call our own, and it behoves us to turn it to the best account for our own benefit, and that of our fellow-men.

It further implies that time is in a state of perpetual flight, or continual lapse, that it is an ever-flowing stream. Let us, then, catch the passing moment and mark the successive stages of our lives, by our advances in the Divine life, and by our growth in grace. And let us bear in mind the account we shall have to render of its use and application.

And, lastly, this verse asserts that the period shall come when time shall be no longer. It will inevitably rise, that sun which shall dawn upon the riven tomb and the reanimated clay, that hour, when the jarring interests, the grasping ambition, the stormy passions of mankind, shall be swamped and lost in one unmingled awe. The day, indeed, *will* come to which no morrow shall succeed, the stars shall fade before its inextinguishable light. That light shall be eternal as the throne whose glittering base it girdles. The angel's voice shall shout the "crack of doom," and the fearful conscience and agonizing guilt confess the presence of its Judge. How many that day will cover with shame and everlasting contempt! On how many slumbering souls will it come as a thief in the night! Thus will it steal upon the man of pleasure, upon the libertine in his midnight orgies; thus will it startle the man of business, steeped in care and worldliness, or the easy voluptuary, who says, "soul take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Thus will it dash the brimming wine-cup from the drunkard's fevered hand, and seal the curse half risen to the scoffer's lip. Thus will it burst upon the hard despiser of the Son of Man, and show the haughty pharisee, who has trampled down the cross, that his foot is dabbling in blood, which, instead of speaking mercy, now cries out for vengeance. To the true believer, however, it will come as the harbinger of peace, and as the breaking of the dawn; to him it will come, not as a thief, but as a welcome guest. And, my friends, how shall it come to us? Are we prepared to take leave of the scenes of time and sense? are we ready dressed in the garb in which we can approach our Judge? Are we prepared to meet him now, this year—this month—this week—this day—this hour? O, what do we know of the coming moment! If *now* these walls should rend, this roof should cleave, and the thrilling clarion of the last trumpet were to pierce our ears, and agitate our hearts, how, even in this hour of worship, would our hearts and thoughts be found? Would not some of us be caught listening to mere words, with earping and with critical ears, anxious to condemn or to approve the mere fabric of a lecture? Would not some of us be caught counting on the chances of loss or gain awaiting us on the morrow? How many would be found with hearts uplifted

before God, and with willing souls, ready to depart and to be with Christ? How many, as they saw their Saviour in the air, would be ready to meet Him, and cry, "Come Lord Jesus?"

My friends, you and I as individuals, have *lost* much time we might have improved, we have all left undone much that we ought to have done. We cannot recal the past; a sincere repentance for abuses is all that we can exercise; but we can improve the future, as a guarantee of our regretfulness for the past. Remember, time is short, and the Judge is at the door. Go forth, then, ye workers in the vineyard of the Lord—go where the crowd is thickest—go where the homes are foulest—go where the oaths are loudest—go where hell is blackest, and float a Gospel message on the feculent air. Go where Satan's hoof has been most firmly planted, and God's fair image trampled into foulest seeming. Go to the dismal haunts, where devils trip it jauntily, and play their direst havoc with the souls of men. Go to the dreary walks, where death and hell go hand in hand together, and the sickle of the one mows down the victims, broadcast, to fill up the other. Go where the monster holds his darkest carnival, and point his victims to the Lamb of God. Go where the surges of damnation rise and dash upon the stony hearts of men, and lift the trident of the cross, and whisper, "Peace, be still!" For, hark! the pillars of the earth are shaking, and the distant trumpet sounds the alarm of doom! The restless earth begins to sicken of the putrifying bones which it conceals, and vomits forth its dead; and, swooping down from heaven, there comes a flying angel, clothed with a cloud, a rainbow round his head, his face all beaming like the sun, and his feet like pillars of celestial fire. Within his hand he bears an open book. One fiery foot he sets upon the earth, the other he plants upon the sea, and the first utterance of his mouth awakes the volleying roar of seven rolling thunders, and as their hoarse vibrations die away, and the big meaning of their sound is sealed, at the mandate of the potent messenger, the angel lifts his awful hand to the attentive heaven, and swears by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that there shall be time no longer.

How soon this vision shall be realized, God only knows. It may be myraids of ages ere it bursts upon the earth: but it will be the end of time with us, in a few short years at most, and perhaps in a few short weeks or days.

To those, then, who are engaged in any way in doing good to the souls of men, or in seeking the promotion of the glory of God, or the kingdom of Christ, we would say, let the fleetness of time stimulate you to fresh and renewed effort. The night is lower-

ing in the sky, it spreads its sable wing already in the looming horizon, it gathers and contracts, the circle narrows, and the light is waning fast; "the night cometh when no man can work." The stroke of death awaits you, and the heart that throbs with sympathy, the lips that speak in love, and the hands that work with zeal, must stiffen and grow cold. Then let the *flight* of time incite you, and the *end* of time encourage you. Upon its rushing wings myriads of deathless souls are being hurried into perdition. If you have ever put forth in pity a hand to pluck them from the burning, put forth yet stronger efforts in the time to come. For every single effort you have made, make ten, for every prayer you have presented, put forth fifty. "For they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." Let the end of time, I say, encourage you. For at that great day, when time shall glide into eternity, and death be swallowed up in victory, when the corruptible shall put on incorruption, and the mortal shall put on immortality, the benison shall await you, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord." The crown of life shall be placed by God's own hand upon your brow, and the everlasting doors thrown open for your entrance "through the gates into the city."

But I cannot dismiss this verse without one earnest effort to press it plainly home to the sinner's heart. The end of time! Just think of it. The end of all your tricks and follies—the end of all your thoughtlessness and sin—the end of all the opportunities of grace—the end of all the overtures of mercy. What will the end of time be to you? Not your introduction to eternal life and happiness, but the end of all your peace, and joy, and comfort, the beginning of a ceaseless cycle of unutterable woe. Oh, my friends, my dear, dying brothers, I have often said the same thing before, but I must say it again, on an occasion like this, and I must pray you, in the name of Christ, as a dying man speaking to dying men, to lay it to heart! *Do* make up your minds to come to the cross. Remember that there is but one time and that is *now*! Now is the accepted time—now is the day of salvation. My fellow-sinners, you have one foot in the grave already, and the earth is crumbling from beneath you, and soon you will have glided in, past all hope, past all friendship, past all warning. Oh, look! the lamp is dying out—see how it flickers and grows dim—the silver cord is loosening—and the golden bowl will soon be broken! Don't talk of *to-morrow*. Boast not thyself of *to-morrow*. I say,

to-day, to-day if you will hear his voice harden not your heart. O fool! fool! fool! why wilt thou die? I leave this part of our theme with that one little word ringing in your ears—*NOW*! O may it haunt you till it drives you to the cross. *Now* begin to lay hold on eternal life. *Now* begin to flee from the wrath to come. *Now* begin to wrestle with God for the application to your accusing conscience of the blood of sprinkling. Now begin to hymn the anthem that shall engage your voice throughout eternity. And O! let time see at least the *commencement* of those divine pursuits which shall be the saint's unspeakable delight, when time shall be no more. Don't stop your ears to the invitations of the cross—don't steel your heart against the pity of the Saviour. O look at him as he *bleeds*, and listen to him as he *pleads*! See him in all the agony of compassion, and ask yourself, what more could even such a Saviour do for you? Is it not enough that he has died, the just for the unjust? Is it not enough that he has for your sake become poor?

“View him prostrate in the garden,
On the ground the Saviour lies,
On the bloody tree behold him,
Hear him cry before he dies,
 . It is finished.
Sinner, will not this suffice?”

1. The other verse I spoke of was this:—“For the time past of our life may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles.”—I have a word or two to say about this.

These words take cognizance of our natural tendency towards worldly and carnal pleasures, and they do this in a spirit of forbearance and tenderness, which, by winning upon our sensibilities, is eminently calculated to induce that humiliation of spirit which must follow upon conviction of sin. We are not rudely accused of vicious and ungodly dispositions—but are quietly left to the whisperings of our own conscience within us, as to how far we are to reproach ourselves, or to take home the reproof it involves. It takes it for granted that we are ourselves well aware of our own corrupt and evil tendencies, and that we know that, while we are fulfilling the natural desires of our own hearts, we are doing violence to the higher and nobler instincts of our better nature, and outraging alike the prescriptions of God's law, and the tender advances of his mercy. There are many profligate and licentious men, who pretend not to see the vile and crying evil and ingratitude of the courses to which they are prone—men who

want to be reasoned into believing that a life of open rebellion against the letter of the law and the spirit of the Gospel, is dishonouring to Him who prescribed the one and devised the other. Who try to make themselves as well as others believe, that it is not an insult to God to live on His mercy without acknowledging it, and to use the tokens of His love as weapons wherewith to set His power at defiance. Men who affect surprised unconsciousness, or put on the airs of injured innocence when they are told that there is foul and dastardly ingratitude, that there is base and impious malignity in the sins they daily perpetrate against the Most High. There are proud and self-complaisant men, who pretend not to know they are mocking God by their empty and vapouring conceits. There are pharisees who amuse themselves with the notion that they are glorifying the Creator by their saintly grimaces and sanctimonious tricks. There are liars who affect to be ignorant of the fact that every art they practise, and every falsehood which they frame, is a fresh renewal of the spitting and the buffeting which assailed the Saviour on the cross. There are sharp practitioners—shrewd, clever, knowing men of the world, as they are called in polite circles, men who feed upon the leanness of their brethren, and batten on the poverty which their cruel avarice inflicts, who coquet with the monstrous delusion that these are laudable and legitimate transactions, and pretend that they don't know that they are defying the Author of that religion which bids us do to others as we would that they should do to us. There are libertines who sport with the idea that they can pamper their appetites without insulting God, and who feign not to know that every time they feed the fire of passion and of lust they crucify afresh the Lord of Glory, and put Him to an open shame. But the text does not stay to reason away fictitious and self-imposed delusions such as these. It at once assumes that we not only are naturally prone to work the works of the flesh, but that we do it in spite of our secret knowledge of its sin. And that, if we ever sin with impunity, it is because we have suppressed our inward consciousness of our turpitude, and checked the influence which would have restrained and guided us. And yet, with all this presumption of our conscious guilt, the inspired Apostle can assume the tone of expostulation and appeal! "Forasmuch as He hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our lives may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles."

2. The verse again appeals by implication to our candour and conscientiousness in dealing with our own hearts.

Although the mere terminology of the verse takes a direct and affirmative shape, it partakes so much of the nature of an *appeal*, that it would almost bear an interrogative construction. It seems as though the Apostle were anxious to prevail upon us just honestly to weigh the matter for ourselves, to strike a balance between the respective value of the wages of sin and the gift of God, to determine in our own judgment whether it were not wiser for us—whether it were not more prudent (to say nothing of our imperative duty) to surrender the present and unsatisfactory gratification of our evil desires, for the sake of realising the future recompense and lasting happiness of a spiritual life, and of escaping the final reward and eternal ruin of the carnal man. The case is put to our common sense. Surely, whether you are young or old, whether you have been a long or a short time engaged in the pursuits of sin, you have made a sufficient trial of the experiment. Deal candidly with your own heart, and see if you have derived any real and lasting happiness from the life you have led. Has the feverish ecstasy of the *moment* of sated lust or pampered passion been a sufficient compensation for the long, long hours of remorse and of depression which have succeeded? Has the meteor rapture of the midnight revel, which lasted for a fleeting span, and lost its pleasure as soon as you unstopped the ears of reason, been so sweet as to atone for all the sick reflections of the morning, for the scorpion lash of an awakened and insulted conscience, or for the abject shame which crimsoned on your deep humiliation? Have the bacchanalian visions of your waking orgies, bright and fairy-like, or graceful and voluptuous, that came and went, and danced and flitted through the drunken fancy, have these been cheaply bought by the demon-spectres that stalked upon the stage when heavy sleep had hid the former from your sight—the dim and grisly phantoms that played in fiendish ecstasy about your burning pillow, and laughed to see the cold and gathering sweat-drops of your mortal terror, start out in clammy tracery upon your pallid brow? Have the *present* usages or sin been so delightful that they tempt you to still further indulgence? It may have been that you have found a passing charm in this wild death-chase. And just as some fair flower will sometimes bloom upon the crumbling turrets of a ruined wall, so it is possible you may have culled a blossom from the terraces of Satan's treacherous strongholds. But if the *present* has had these reliefs, think calmly of the future. Is it true that

the broad road on which you are walking so easily *now*, terminates in the blackness of darkness for ever? Is it true that the cool and mossy carpet upon which you trip so daintily, only brings you to the hot and scorching adamant and "burning marl" of the infernal pit? Is it true that the lights you follow are but the *ignes fatui* of a moral swamp, born amidst the feculent mists of hell, and belched from the panting throats of the citizens of perdition? It is true, and if you go on you shall find it so; but stop in time, let "the past suffice to have wrought the works of the Gentiles." Sun yourself no longer under that fictitious orb, for though it shines with a seductive brightness, the telescope of truth shall show you that a demon's eyes are leering through its disc. Please yourself no longer by gazing on those clustering fruits, for, though they look so luscious and so sweet, they only "tempt the eye, but turn to ashes on the lip." Gather no more of those painted flowers, for though they look so fair, and send up such a grateful fragrance to the sense, the worm that dieth not lies gnawing at their petals, and that which looks like blooming immortality, is but the casket of a living death.

3. The words under review appear to imply further, that at whatever stage of life we may be, however near the early morning, or close upon the evening of our days, it is never too early or too late to begin to renounce the works of the Gentiles, and assume the light and easy yoke of Christ.

It is never too early to begin to serve God. The simple petition of the lisping child beside its mother's chair ascends a grateful incense up to the Eternal Throne. And just as the violets, jewelled with the early morning dew, give forth the freshest and the most balmy perfume; just as the delicate anemone looks fairest when it holds within its petalled cup the glistening nectar of the dawn; just as the trellised jasmine decks the lattice window of the waking rustic maid most sweetly, when it twinkles as with a tear of joyous welcome to the sun when first it streaks the brightening east; so does the simple earnest prayer of early childhood rise to the altar of the Great High Priest, the sweetest and sublimest savour that ever wreaths its fragrance round the bright Shekinah.

The human heart is like an urn, wherein are gradually collected the spices and the sweets which are to burn as incense at the various shrines at which it bows. There is one foul element ever lurking there, which, unless expelled by some holier influence, will ever vitiate and mar the sacrifice whenever the altar on which it is presented is a pure one. That poisonous virus is sin. Sin, which cankers, corrupts, dissembles, and

deceives. Sin, which will always beckon us away from the shrine of virtue or of piety, to the garish altars of licentiousness and Satan. Sin, which will be perpetually busy to distract our thoughts, and throw in evil elements into the burnt-offering which we try to present to Heaven. But there is a time of life when this foul enemy lies dormant, when this noxious drug which has crept in amongst our cinnamon and frankincense and myrrh, has little corrupting or debasing power, and when, if the impulse be but timely given, and the Spirit's sacred fire be sought and found, the sweeter spices shall outvie the loathsome odour, and preserve the temple pure and undefiled. This time is childhood—childhood! that time of mirthful innocency, that gentle breaking of the light of life upon the darkness of an evil world. Childhood! that sinless period, when the sacred ties of home and kindred hallow and keep pure the heart's affections. Childhood! when our head is patted by a father's hand, when our dimpled cheek is anointed by a mother's kiss, when sitting at the feet of her who gave us birth—her knee our altar, and her love our Heaven—we hear her tell of Him who took the children in His arms in Galilee, and who said, “Suffer them to come to me, and forbid them not.” Childhood! the vernal, and the virgin springtide of our love and our life, when the snowdrops, and the lilies, and the daisies deck the bosom, so soon, alas! to be coated with the moss and with the stubble of this sordid world. Childhood! when the image of our Maker still beams from out the eye, and mantles in the smile. O, who would not “live his childhood o'er again!” Who, that has been orphaned of a fond and praying mother, would not give the world once more to look into her face, to rest his head upon her breast, and to ask her pardon for the way in which her precepts have been forgotten, and her love neglected!

But we have said that it is never too late to accept the offers of salvation, or to turn away from sin. Although a long life consecrated to God is, of course, the best, so long as the immortal part of our nature clings to its prison-house, it is never too late to shake our wings from the pollution which would weigh them down, and keep them from ascending to the skies.

The love and long-suffering of Christ are exhaustless, and while we stand this side the grave, while we are on the earthy side of perdition, every promise, every overture, and every blessing are freely available. To him then who has grown gray in sin, to the sturdiest veteran in the mustered host of Satan, to the old blasphemer, whose shrivelled throat has been an open sepulchre, gorged with a teeming progeny of oaths and curses,

to him who has battered for more than three-score years and ten upon the wages of the devil, to him who has loved through all his ~~livelong~~ days to laugh and sneer at Gospel truth, and who even yet would let the death's-head grin of derision pucker his bloodless face, whenever Christ is mentioned, or the cross is preached—to him I would say as an ambassador for my Master, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” And I would point him as my witness to a certain bright and white-robed spirit, hovering near the Throne in Heaven—a spirit from whose lips the sweetest minstrelsy is heard, a spirit in whose hand a palm of triumph waves, and on whose brow a circling crown is sparkling. I would say, Old Man, wilt thou ask yonder spirit who he was on earth? The spirit hears the question, and he says in answer, I was bred and born amongst a nest of Jewish thieves, and all my life was spent in theft and robbery, and for my crimes I was crucified; but there hung another beside me, and as my life was slowly ebbing forth, I turned to Him and said, “Remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom;” and as He smiled upon me through His mortal pain, He cried, “To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise,” and ever since the words escaped His lips, I have been *here, here*, serving him day and night before His throne. *Here* hymning His high and worthy praise in swelling chorus with His own ransomed children—*here* wearing the robes in which He clothed me, and the crown with which He crowned me—*here* singing, as I always *mean* to sing: “Now unto Him who hath loved me, and washed me from my sins in His blood. to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever!”

While regretful retrospects of misspent time are ever to be regarded as encouraging indications, and wholesome exercises of self-discipline, they are chiefly commendable for the state of mind which they betoken, and the reformation which they promise, and not for any particular merit in the acts themselves.

Even the largest charity can repose but little confidence in the genuineness of that man's regrets who is ever accusing himself of sin, and deploring his past transgressions and neglected chances, while he never makes an effort to redeem the present or improve the future. Imagine some foot-sore traveller upon a tedious pilgrimage. He set out with what he fancied was provision enough for his journey, but it became exhausted long before he got half way along his road. Pitying his need, the generous host of the way-side tavern offers him rest and refreshment. But no, he is too proud to take it! Again, another good

Samaritan, seeing his distressed, and tired, and almost despairing look, extends his cup to his parched lips, but still he haughtily refuses. He has resisted many such kind offers on his journey, till at length, wearied in spirit, and completely overcome in soul and body, he sinks down upon a stone by the road side, and weeps and tears his hair, and cries, "O that I had listened to the kind advances which were so freely made to me! Fool that I was to let my cursed pride reject such generous offers! How lightly I might have tripped along, but for my stiffnecked haughtiness! Now I must lie down to die!" Lie, down to die! Nonsense, man! Get up and urge your limbs along a little further. Your lamentation is true enough; you *were* a fool, and worse than a fool, to despise the kindness that was offered you; but if you really mean it, don't lie roaring there, but gird your loins and take your staff once more, and plod a little further, and try if you cannot walk better without your pride than with it. Perhaps you will pass some other halting place, bye and bye, where you may find a welcome—why, even now, you may see a light in yonder window—we are almost there. What is that written up above the door? "Knock and it shall be opened." Don't be afraid! Never mind the memories of your past ingratitude, which come crowding in upon you on the threshold. Why, here is the kind host actually opening to you, ere you have summoned up the heart to knock. What is it that he says—"Be off, I've nothing for you, we have so many beggars here, we can't assist them all?" No, I did not understand him so, certainly; he could not have said that with such a beaming smile upon his face. Listen once more, for he speaks more earnestly than before, as though he feared you would pass by without attending to him. See how he beckons you to approach; why, there are tears of entreaty coursing down his cheeks. O, unstop your ears and listen! Do you hear him now? "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Does that apply to you? are you weary and heavy laden? do you feel the need of rest? Then the invitation is for you. You have only just to take it, and be eased of every load, and be forgiven every sin, and bear through all your future pilgrimage, the yoke which is easy and the burden which is light.

The past cannot be recalled. Let us show, then, the sincerity of our regrets for what has been evil in it, by improving the present, and working while it is called to-day, by accepting the oft-rejected offer of mercy at once, not overshadowing the brightness of the future with the darkness of the past, but

irradiating the present with the borrowed brightness of the coming day. Let us not be turning the precious hours of the present into the wasting twilight of expiring hope, but seek to have them changed into the gathering dawn of an eternal noon. "Seek ye the Lord *while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.*" Turn ye to the strongholds, ye prisoners of hope, for behold, *now* is the accepted time, *to-day* is the day of salvation.

Now one parting word. Last Sunday I took the liberty of personally addressing those who were old in years as well as sin. The subject of to-day warrants me in repeating that appeal.

I have perhaps addressed many whose grey and hoary heads tell of an opening grave. Some of these have fought the battle of life and the fight of faith well. To them I dare say nothing, only leave them to hear their Lord's "Well done," and pray for grace to follow them myself.

But some who are verging toward the grave, may, all through life, have been heedless about their souls, and even yet be careless about their eternal destiny. My friends—it may be the last time you and I shall meet on earth. I cannot let you go without a word of warning and entreaty.

With you "the day is far spent and the night is at hand," and on your stunned and heavy ears the echoes fall in dull and muffled accents. You have left behind you a long, long train of footsteps—all printed on the treacherous soil of Satan's paths. And those footsteps are stained with blood. It is not your own. It is blood that *might* have washed you clean and made you spotless as a new-born child—it is the blood of the Son of God who died for you, which you have trampled under foot. But I will not call before you the list of your byegone sins. I will only implore you to look over the threshold of the tomb, upon whose brink you totter—into the long black future. There seems there but a gloomy prospect for you. But even now, at this late season—although your head is gray, your step is feeble, and your brow is furrowed—it may not be yet too late to turn. Behold, thou reverend veteran in guilt—I lift before you the cross of Christ—and, even yet, in His name I say unto you, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." It is a sad sad thing, I know, to put repentance off so late—but it is better to repent late than to repent never. It may, indeed, be too late to recall the unblighted joy of a long Christian life—but it is not too late to grasp the nail-pierced hand of Jesus. Better had your infant voice first lisped the accents of a Saviour's love—but better *now* than never. 'Tis true

the sun will beam more often and more brightly on the young and tender blade—'tis true, its genial breath will sigh upon it with a more reviving and more fostering power. But still there are times, even when the overhanging cloud that sits upon the mountain's brow, and shrouds its lofty summit in a gathering pall, is rolled away before the vernal breeze and the brightening beam—and Phœbus dallies with her fairest rays among the snowy locks of grey Mont Blanc, and as her lavish hand rests softly on his head, the snow flakes gently melt and trickle down in tears. Full many a livelong day and moonlight night the herdsman and the mountaineer have cast a wistful eye towards that lofty peak, but it has been veiled amidst the curtaining ether. But now—the glow has come at last, and only see how blazing and how dazzling the frosty summit beams! The snowy cap gleams like a warrior's helmet or a conqueror's crown, and the white old head, so often draped with the fading tapestry of gloom, is pillowed like a wanton on the ample bosom of the orb of day!

So shall thy hoary brow, my aged fellow-sinner, long overcast with clouds and doubts—perhaps for three-score years and ten—become the resting-place of the Sun of Righteousness's selected beams—so shall the hand of pardoning love enfold you with its largesses of grace and glory—so shall the drops of mercy fall as the rain, and distil as the dew about your drooping head—if you will but lay the hand of faith upon the great propitiatory. If you will but take the arm of Christ to hold up your faltering steps—if you will but dissipate the clouds upon the breath of prayer—and woo the sunbeams with the eye of faith.

“Ye, no more your suns descending,
 Waning moons no more shall see:
 But—your griefs for ever ending,
 Find eternal noon in me:
 God shall rise, and shining o'er you,
 Change to day the gloom of night;
 He, the Lord, shall be your glory
 God—your everlasting light!”

Freedom!

A LECTURE

BY THE REV. A. MURSELL,

IN THE

FREE TRADE HALL, NOVEMBER 22ND, 1857.

THERE is something exhilarating in the word Freedom, which sets the whole soul in a warm glow, like that a man feels after a shower-bath. The abstract idea of Freedom is one of unmingled exultation. And the concrete reality is generally regarded as altogether glorious. But still there are aspects in which even Freedom looks repulsive; and, just as some fair and lovely child can, in a capricious whim, contort his handsome features into an ugly or grotesque appearance, so, too, can Freedom's visage darken into a shadowy scowl, or distend into an offensive grin. In short, beautiful though she be, Freedom can make herself disgusting. For example—I fancy there are few of our patriotic and high-souled platform orators who talk about “the despot's chain,” and “a nation's wrongs,” who would not be offended at the easy and familiar freedom which would invade his plate-chest, and make free with his spoons, and knives and forks. There is a “free and enlightened republic,” the other side of the Atlantic, in which the little bantling, liberty, has been somewhat spoiled; and where it “takes liberties” of its own, which rather border on the disagreeable. I do not allude here, to the amiable freak of buying and selling human nature like ribs of beef or horse-flesh, nor to the bartering and swopping of mothers, sisters, and daughters. I do not allude to the tearing of babies from a mother's breast; or the severance of husbands from wives, and fathers from children. I do not allude to the traffic in souls and bodies, or to the seasons of commercial prosperity or panic, caused by fluctuations in the price of men and women; nor do I allude to the buying with dollars, at the nod of the salesman,

that which was bought with the Redeemer's blood, when He bowed his head, and cried "it is finished." But I allude to the more gentlemanly antics that freedom will sometimes play in that chosen and select asylum—where "all men are brothers." I allude to the easy gentility with which one brother will stick a bowie-knife into his neighbour's heart, for voting at a different polling-booth from himself; to the graceful dexterity with which a free and enlightened citizen will contrive to squirt his tobacco-juice from his chaste lips, within an inch of a lady's cheek, without anointing her with the savoury ejection. I allude to the manly independence, which does not scruple to put a pair of dirty boots upon a dinner table, or to comb the hair over the tablecloth, between the first and second courses. I allude to the delicately refined taste, that considers that a cup of tea is greatly improved by a little Prince's mixture, or Taddy's brown; and which, therefore, puts the sugar in with fingers rich and luscious with snuff, or treacly and sticky with the finest pigtail. These are manly and mature aspects of freedom, which, to a nation like ourselves—a race of slaves, unripe for liberty, are, on the whole, a little disagreeable. But still, there are a few phases in which she appears attractive, even to us, and to some of these we shall now briefly turn.

Every Englishman boasts that he is a free-man, whatever Brother Jonathan may think of him. John Bull has begun to labour under the impression that he has a tolerably correct notion of true and rational freedom. And he points, in proof of it, to a newspaper press, disseminating, without let or hindrance, every shade of political and ecclesiastical opinion—to ten thousand platforms and pulpits, from which ten thousand varieties of religious doctrines are proclaimed, and where the infidel and the Christian can ply their work together, no man daring to make them afraid. He points to the foreign exiles who relate their country's grievances, and who have been hounded by despots from their native land, as witnesses to the freedom of this island home of ours. He points to a well-digested statute-book in which such provisions as trial by jury, and free-trade, stand out as the great bulwarks of our civil freedom. And when he does this he feels proud of his country; and while every individual member of the great body corporate—whether he lives like Diogenes in a tub, or like Dives in a palace; whether he vegetates in lodgings at 3s. 6d. a week, or luxuriates in sumptuous quarters at nobody knows what a year; whether he sleeps in a turn-up bed, painted to look like a side-board in the day-time, or reclines amidst the folds of the most protuberant of feather-beds,

beneath the most gorgeous of canopies and curtains ; whether he feeds upon the thinnest of gruel or the thickest of soup ; whether he wears the most threadbare of all fustian, and rusticates upon the "husks that the swine do eat;" or whether he parades in "purple and fine linen," and "fares sumptuously every day"—while every individual member of the great body corporate *glories* in the idea that "an Englishman's house is his castle;" the whole nation, whatever be their minor political dissensions, exult, with the eloquent Curran, that, "Liberty is commensurate with, and inseparable from, British soil ; that there is that in it, which proclaims, even to the stranger and the foreigner, the first moment he sets his foot upon it, that the ground on which he treads is holy, and consecrated by the genius of universal emancipation. No matter in what language his doom may have been pronounced. No matter what complexion, incompatible with freedom, an Indian or an African sun may have burned upon him. No matter in what battle his liberties may have been cloven down. No matter with what solemnities he may have been devoted upon the altar of slavery ; the first moment he sets his foot upon the sacred soil of Britain, the altar and the god sink together in the dust ; his soul walks abroad in her own majesty ; his body swells beyond the measure of his chains, which burst from around him, and he stands redeemed, regenerated, and disenthralled, by the irresistible genius of universal emancipation."

Looking upon ourselves and one another, then, simply as the inhabitants of the freest nation on the earth, we have high and overwhelming responsibilities. But it is possible to make too free with freedom—to take liberties with liberty. There are other prisons in this town of ours besides the New Bailey and Belle Vue Gaol. There are other captives living around us, besides the poor convicts on the treadmill, or the caged tenants of the dungeon. There are other chains besides the massive links that echo on the cold pavement of the culprit's cell ; yes, chains more firmly clasped, more hopelessly entwined. Those prisons are the homes of what you and I call freemen. These captives are the fathers of families, who roam the city streets at will, whom no bars or locks confine from straying where they choose. These chains are riveted about the hearts of myriads whose limbs are free as air, clamped and locked around their noblest affections and tenderest sympathies ; and though no manacle is seen to fetter or enchain the body, the mind and heart are in a dismal bondage, the pulses of the inner life are kept in durance vile, and "the iron has entered into the *soul*."

The abuse of Freedom is Slavery. And these *captive freemen*, if we may use such a paradox, are those who have made free with Freedom.

Let us go into the homes of some of them, or rather let Fancy take us there, and see if anything is brought home to ourselves, or if the ideal is mixed up with any reality with which we are acquainted.

Suppose you have just returned to Manchester, after four or five years' absence. You left an old and dear friend behind you when first you went away, and your first thought upon returning is to call and see how he is getting on. As you are preparing to go out, you recal to mind what your old friend used to be—you remember well what a tall, upright, handsome fellow he was, and as you bring back to recollection, once more, the piercing glance of his bright black eye, and the merry ring or his manly voice, you long to wring him by the hand once more, and feel the grip of his fingers in return, like old times come back again. How well you can remember him! "I wish he had not been quite so rakish," you can't help saying to yourself; "he was getting rather *fast* when I left, I should hope he has become steadier now." Having ascertained where he lives, you set off, longing to spend another of the jolly old evenings with your old friend. Ringing at the bell, you learn from the servant that he is asleep just now, that he is not very well, and has been ailing for a good while. In a little time he wakes, and, having sent up your name, you are ushered into his room. But, instead of meeting you at the door with his roystering laugh, and merry slap on the shoulder, you are welcomed by a feeble voice, and sickly smile of recognition, from a prostrate skeleton upon the sofa. "Well, old boy," says he, "how are you? You are not quite so much changed as I am. I have become an old man since I saw you last, excuse my getting up, I'm not quite so sanguine about the stability of my legs, as to trust them to bear the weight of my very corpulent body." You take hold of the hand you have so often pressed before; and, as its dry, hot, feverish fingers close upon your own, you hardly can believe that this is all that's left of that once brawny fist. It feels like shaking hands with Death. "Why, Fred., my dear old friend, whatever can it be that's brought you to this pass?" "*Look in my face*—you seem afraid to do that—and read the answer there." Raising your eyelids, trembling with rising tears, to the wan face—you need no further answer. Eyes sunk and glassy, cheeks hollow, livid, and transparent, with hectic spots coming and going, like the red, consuming touch of fever,

raging inwardly, and casting its lurid flush through the thin covering of flesh upon the lantern jaws: lips parched, and puckered with the burning thirst; the hot tongue, shrivelled, as though it had been prisoned in the bars of some slow furnace; the thick breath, almost hissing forth, like a sultry blast of loathsome air; the nostrils all dilated, and the sharp teeth striking their bite into the bloodless lip to check the groan of agony which struggles to escape; these are the ghastly letters by whose aid you spell out the name of your friend's disease; these are the hideous characters in which the history of the past is syllabled. How well you can remember now the times that you have trembled for the end; when you have opened the door for your old fellow-lodger at four and five o'clock in the morning, and listened to the raving ribaldry of his restless dreams! How well you can remember now, how easily he would hearken to the whispered accents of cajolery murmured into his ear in the quiet streets at night! How well you can remember, when he would listen for the tripping tread, or shuffling approach of her whose "feet abide not in her house, who is now without, now in the streets, and who lieth in wait at every corner." And now as you look upon this wreck and ruin of the generous comrade of your earlier days, you feel that the freedom of lust is the slavery of the soul; that the liberty of the libertine enchains and cages down the fairest and the holiest aspirations of the mind: that the very weapon with which passion cuts in twain the cords that bind her, clips too and cripples the airy pinions of the bounding heart and soaring soul; the very hand that casts the bridle on the rampant neck of appetite, screws fast the curb which checks the noble thought, and manacles the fond desire that would woo the spirits of the skies. O, if I speak to one who has preferred the freedom of sensual pleasure to the nobler liberty of the sons of God; if I speak to one who has suffered himself to be immeshed in the snares of the sorceress, whose incantations call away the mind into the temple of temptation; who has lent an ear to the harlot's midnight witchery, and who is hung about with the seducer's chains, I would cry to him to break off the hellish spell which holds him captive. "Hearken unto me, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth, let not thy heart decline unto her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

Come and see another of these willing slaves—these chained free-men. You'll find him up some mouldy break-neck staircase, in

a fusty little counting-house, sitting on a high stool at a desk, a pair of spectacles across his nose, a pen behind his ear, and a cash-box by his side. It is Christmas Eve, and all the other offices are long shut up. "Why hang it all, Tomkins, what are you doing here this time of night, I've been to your house to look for you, and Mrs. Tomkins said you hadn't come home yet; I want you and Mrs. T. to come up and have some frizzled sausages and roast-goose with me to-night, and Bob and Fanny Spillikins shall have a kiss under the mistletoe. Come along! The idea of being closeted up with ledgers and invoices, on a Christmas Eve!" "Five and eight are thirteen, and seven are twenty, and nine are twenty nine. There, now, Joe, you've put me out with all your jargon, I wish you'd leave a fellow alone; I'm balancing my books." "But it's holiday time, man, and if you balance books at Christmas you deserve to *lose your balance*. If you won't come, at all events you'll let Mrs. Tomkins and the girls come up?" "No I won't, so just don't you try to fill their heads with such nonsense." We won't hold any more converse with such a man as this than is absolutely necessary for our purpose. The man lives in a free country, he calls no man master but himself, and yet, if he is not a slave, there's no such thing. He *has* a master, and that master is money. His soul is padlocked up in that cash-box by his side, the greasy ledger before him is his Book of Life, and so long as he is but "posted up" there, all is right, he has no care upon his mind. Talk of idolatry! The poor besotted devotee, who rolls himself beneath the lumbering wheels of Juggernaut's preposterous car, is not more blinded in his mind or fettered in his heart than this rich pauper. The hapless Hindoo wife, who cooks herself like pork beside the ashes of her mouldering spouse, is not in a more pitiful moral gloom than this poor suppliant at the shrine of the Golden Calf, who finds a *sovereign* cure for every ailment in a twenty-shilling piece. To tell a working-man, in hard times like these, that the love of money is the root of all evil, is nonsense; but to warn the world against the slavery of the overweening greed of pelf, is the bounden duty of a righteous man.

But I have just one more picture of this negative slavery—this distorted freedom, to present to you. A fortnight ago, I tried to sketch before you a drunkard's home, in which the tippler was a man—a husband—and a father. Now, at the request of a working man, I am about to try to bring before you a scene even more repulsive, more intensely loathsome than the other: for the drunkard is a woman—a wife—and a mother. One would have hoped that such a description would be unnecessary; that

it would be so wildly unnatural as to pass the bounds of truth; but though it is a rarer case than the other, it is alas! not a mere invention, but only a feeble fiction founded on a sad and a gigantic fact. Generally, indeed, it is the husband's coarseness and intemperance that drives the wife to these excesses; but sometimes the story is reversed, and the man is ruined by the woman's vices. Such is the case in the cottage where we would now conduct you. A cottage round whose fireside are seated four or five young children, the oldest only nine or ten years old, who is vainly trying to hush an infant into slumber in a dirty and neglected-looking cradle, amidst the din and uproar of the boisterous group. The second child, a lad of seven or eight, is thrusting chips of wood between the bars, and brandishing them about the room like harmless playthings. The third, a little girl of six, is trying to make a kettle boil for her father's tea when he comes home, and the rest are joining in the sport of juggling with these firebrands, and showering sparks about the room. No man or woman can be seen to speak of order, or to keep the tameless little crew in check. Here is freedom with a vengeance, it is Liberty Hall run mad; for soon the fiery revels grow more fiery still, and the unbridled little urchins quarrel, rave, and fight. A brother twists his angry little fingers in his sister's hair, and drags her down upon the floor, while the infant is tumbled from its crib, and lies bruised and roaring upon the hearthstone. Words, which would terrify a full-grown man of common decency and morals, are poured from those throats like boiling water, and oaths and filthy phrases are "familiar in their mouths as household words." Just as the fray is at its height, the tired father enters from his daily toil. No wife is there to give him welcome, no gentle hand to ease him of his hat and coat, to spread the tea-board, or to beckon him to sit down and drown his languor in "the cup that cheers but not inebriates." No, the only welcome that he gets is the screaming of some bleeding child, or the mingled accusations and complaints of wounded boys and girls. And have these children no mother living to care for them and teach them? O yes, although a stranger might indeed suppose that they were orphans from some foundling, just let loose, they have a mother, and no mistake. But where is she? why is she not at home? Ah why indeed! The father asks the self same question as soon as he can make his voice heard above the Babel roar. "O she's been out these two hours," screams the eldest girl. He calls a neighbour in to mind the children for a minute, while he just looks down the street to see if he can find his wife. His search is not a long one, for soon he comes

amongst a noisy brawling crowd of slatternly and dirty hags, whose screaming voices may be heard raising the echoes far and wide. And in the centre of the motley group, he sees two women tearing the hair from one another's heads, and driving their nails like falcon's talons into one another's flesh, while their thick drunken voices raise a yell of blasphemy and vile obscenity, that might well make angels tremble and the very devils blush. His heart sinks down within him, as he catches amidst this hell-screed the accents of his wife! the partner of his life, the mother of his children! O God! and this is the mild and tender maiden that I led, but ten short years ago, to the altar, where she swore in Thy great name to love, to honour, and obey! Some potent and tremendous demon surely must have been let loose upon her, to have strangled and beat down so foully all those fond endearing attributes, which, with their womanly enchantments, led my heart's intensest love subdued and captive. Where are the gentle spells that quelled and melted down my soul in tender and in rapt devotion? where is the fragrant incense of affection that floated round me from this shrine? what awful storm has wrecked the light and fairy craft that sailed amidst the billows of a sea of love? what robber-hand has ransacked and despoiled the sacred casket of a wife's devotion and a mother's love? 'Tis drink, the demon drink has burst the sanctuary door, and has broken and cast down the sacred images; 'tis the liquid fire from that seething furnace of perdition that has burned and shrivelled up the choicest handiwork of God; it is the molten lava from that stifling volcano that has swamped the hallowed tenement; it is the whirling eddy of that yeasty Maelstrom that has sucked and swallowed down the goodly vessel; it is the cankerous poison of that laboratory of hell that has envenomed all the life and beauty of the flower. O woman, woman, thou noblest triumph of the great Creator's skill, thou crowning evidence of God's omnipotence, "thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature," let not the sacred offspring of thy soul—the love that reigns within thy heart as in her chosen temple—O let it not be charred and blackened in the Moloch-fires of the drunkard's offertory, let not thy tenderness be bound a victim on the pile of such a hideous immolation, but—by the eloquence of home, with all its loving cares, by the stalwart pressure of a husband's hand, by the budding loveliness of that blooming girl, by the growing jeopardy of that laughing boy, by the helpless wail of yonder sickly babe—O let prudence and sobriety control your breast, let love and gentleness retain their throne, and let no base usurper strike the sceptre from their grasp, or dare depose them

from their sacred seat! A drunken wife! O, what a frightful sacrilege. A tipling mother! O, what a foul anomaly. A fallen angel! Can it be that there really is such a phenomenon—or am I only raving? If every conscience, even in this room, could speak aloud, what answer would it give to such a question? Fancy an infant hanging on the bosom of a tipsy mother, who hiccups out some sottish snatches from a filthy song, instead of the sweet lullaby with which she used to soothe it into slumber! I will not dwell upon this picture longer; but as I let the curtain fall upon it, I would fain entreat each drinking wife or mother to pause, and think upon the certain death she is preparing for her children, and the living hell that she is breeding for her husband—to listen to the lisping voice that calls to her from the cradle, as well as to the louder accents that appeal to her from Heaven, and clasp the chain more closely round her heart that binds it to her home and household, and break the fetter that enthralls her as a captive to the foeman of her own and of her children's souls.

But all this time I have been holding Freedom up as a distorted thing, and carrying it, as it were, in effigy before you. Or rather I have spoken of the worst of every form of slavery; the slavery in which the prisoner cannot feel his chains, and mistakes the torchlight of his dungeon, for the sunshine of the day. But now it is time to look at Freedom with her charms unveiled, to see her as she is, “with all her beams unshorn.” These imperceptible fetters, of which we have been speaking, are forged in hell, and riveted about us by the powers of darkness. The scenes of earth are too well calculated to aid these malignant agents, and to help to bind the manacles still faster. It is not Satan's will that we should always wear our bonds without perceiving them, but only that we may not feel the deadly coil until it has been made fast to the gloomy rafters of the caverns of despair, and till all hope of ever breathing more the pure and wholesome air, or ever looking more upon the light of day, is fled away for ever. When he has quite ensnared our spirits, and vanquished our immortal souls, then we may writhe beneath the adamantine yoke, and fret under the galling chain as restlessly as we will, we may weep, and howl, and rave for light and liberty, and the deeper the groan, the sweeter will the music of our hopeless anguish play upon his ear. It is only *now*—while we have Bibles, and churches, and chapels, and city missionaries, and parsons, and Sunday-school teachers, and things and people of that sort, interfering with his plans—that Satan is so wary with us, and so anxious to make us comfortable in his service.

Because he knows that his dominion of the human heart is not secure, so long as there is an avenue left open for the shining in of Gospel truth, or for the breaking of a smile from heaven. He knows that, if the captive can once catch a glimpse of Freedom with her eyes unveiled, he will never be deluded longer by the mask in which his guile has dressed her. And so his object is to keep her vizard down, and show a dummy in the place of the reality. He has lots of human, as well as infernal apprentices, engaged in the foul work of sealing up each crevice of the mind by which a sunbeam might glint through to drive away the mist. He sets up public lecturers to preach anything but the Gospel; men who will tell the world to be manly and think for themselves, and not be hoodwinked by a host of sectaries who would fain coerce them to cry but one shibboleth with theirs. He forms Young Men's Associations, in which determinations are made to keep abreast of this go-ahead age, and to outstrip and deride the sleepy "orthodox school," who are even yet so slow and stupid as to stick to the old and obsolete jargon about Christ and Him crucified. O, yes, the devil is a sagacious tactician—he is up to the intellectual dodge, the go-ahead dodge, and every other dodge, and whenever he can manage to dodge between the sinner and his Saviour, or to thrust these opaque dogmas between the criminal and the cross, his end is gained.

My friends, you and I were born beneath the shadow of an overhanging mountain, and alas! too many of us still linger in our native place! The caverns of that mountain ever and anon burst forth with forked tongues of flame, and from the clouds which gather round its brow the hoarse and hollow thunder-peal is heard. And now, if you will raise your eye aloft, up to the frowning summit, you may see a stern and dark-robed figure slowly rise out of the sable cloud, and scowl with angry countenance upon the earth. With his left hand he coils a ponderous chain around the limbs of every human being, while, with his right, he fiercely lashes all mankind with a flaming and a two-edged sword. Anon he pauses in his work of retribution, and points his finger to the broken tablets of God's holy law. But just as he is about again to bring down the uplifted sword, and coil the heavy chain once more, a bright and beaming messenger withdraws the folded curtains of the clouded heaven, and alights with airy footstep on the mountain top. She smiles, and as she lifts her lustrous eyes up to the stern face of justice, it glistens with a tear of joy, and even the avenger's frowning brow is softened to relenting. Mercy—for she it is—extends her hands, and clasps the uplifted sword, and stretches out her finger to a

streak on the horizon's verge. The dark eye of justice follows the fair index, and he can see *another* mountain, and *another* scene enacting on its brow. A cross is there, and on it hangs a victim crucified. A crown of thorns enwreaths the victim's head, but a halo of ethereal effluence—invisible indeed to mortal eyes, but palpable to the eye of the amazed spectator from the other mount—a halo of ethereal effluence quivers about his brow. A voice is heard in agonizing prayer to Heaven: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and Sinai's thunders lull their pealing blast, and rumble dimly and more distant till they die away. Another cry goes forth, and floats into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth—"It is finished;" and as the words escape the lips of the expiring Saviour of the world, all Sinai's playing lightnings sheath their flames; the blackening cloud that rests upon its top disperses; and Justice drops the sword and weeps upon the neck of Mercy. The galling chain untwines its folds, and all mankind may now be free. Freedom to the prisoner in the labyrinth of lust. Freedom to the victim in the charnel house of guilt. Freedom to the miser with his golden chain, and his argentine fetters. Freedom to the hoarse blasphemer, whose watch-word is the *Shibboleth* of death. Freedom to the drunkard whose tyrant has immeshed his soul, and lorded it long over his immortal spirit. Freedom to all—for all have been too long enchained.

"Fling wide the casement! Blessed air
That bear'st the Godhead's gifts above—
Now! while the spirit lingers there,
Which can thy fragrance feel and love,
Come to my brow, and cool my lips,
And sooth these eyes in their eclipse."

O, yes, my fellow sinners! you and I have been too long enslaved. The heavy door has been too long shut up against us, and the dungeon walls have been too long unlighted. Full often has the tramping footstep sounded along the echoing corridor without, and as the wicket of the dungeon door has been withdrawn, the question has been asked by Conscience—"Whence dost thou come?" And the stern accents have responded, "from Sinai, with another long account for payment, and another satisfaction to exact." Another morning brings another visitor, and still the answer is, "from Sinai, with another unpaid debt to seek atonement for, another bill of heavy taxes to present." O, culprit! can'st thou tell the lingering years that thou hast been imprisoned here—the long, long term of durance thou hast suffered, a slave despairing of thy freedom!

Your birthday comes round again, amidst the circling anniversaries and epochs of your thralldom, and with its earliest light there comes another herald, rattling with his urgent message at the wicket in the door. "From Sinai." Still from Sinai! with its stern demands for payment, and its long arrears of yet uncanceled debts.

O that the wicket-gate no more might swing upon its hinges, if its opening is ever to be the signal for these cruel and insatiable invasions! O God! what abject slavery is the bondage of despair! No dawning ray of hope or distant sigh of liberty, but only fresh reminders of my dread captivity, and new reverberations of the music of my chains! Better to die than live for ever thus. O conscience! thou unswerving menial, who hast waited on my bondage so untiringly; canst thou not strike some mortal blow? Canst thou not plunge some barbed arrow in my soul that shall destroy its immortality, and end its woe? Hark! Even now I hear another footstep, and dread the entrance of some fresh tormenter. Listen again! the step is lighter than my usual visitant's, and I hear the jingling of keys. It is a cruel trick to tantalize my soul with thoughts of liberty. The key is in the rusty lock, and not the wicket only, but the ponderous and folding doors are flung wide open. O what a balmy rush of air is this that fans my throbbing brow! O what a radiant glimpse of heaven's light was that which flashed across my startled vision! "From Calvary," the herald cries; and smites the fetters from the captive's limbs! From Calvary! with the receipt in full for all thy debts, and a true passport to eternal life! From Calvary! with gracious news of mercy, and a free pardon written in atoning blood! Yes; this is the ransom that the Son of God has purchased! This is the liberty wherewith Christ can make you free!

Smiles and Tears;

A LECTURE

BY THE REV. A. MURSELL,

IN THE

FREE TRADE HALL, NOVEMBER 29TH, 1857.

I NEED not pause long to dilate by way of introduction upon the extraordinary effect of these several manifestations as weapons of attack upon the hearts of men. It would be superfluous to stay for one instant to remark upon the electric shock which thrilled through John Thomas's bosom when the chaste Susannah cast a smile upon him at the church door, or to describe the way in which all Frederick's valorous determinations came unscrewed, as soon as the first tear of remonstrance was seen to roll down Angolina's cheek. The young men are all perfectly aware, by experience, of these powerful influences, without any assistance from me—and as to the fair ones themselves, none can possibly be more conscious of their power than those who wield them with such signal effect. Ladies, no doubt, often congratulate one another, in private, upon the mighty spell they exercise—and they have not scrupled to launch forth their exultations on the world in general—in rapt and soul-inspiring verse. See how strong a stress is laid upon the efficacy of Smiles and Tears, in the following beautiful and expressive lines,—supposed to be spoken by a young lady:—

“The lords of creation men we call,

And they think they rule the whole;

But they're much mistaken, after all,

For they're under woman's control

For ever since the world began

It has always been the way;

For did not Adam, the very first man,

The very first woman obey?

Ye lords, who at present hear my song,

I know you will quickly say,

Our size is more great, our nerves more strong,

Shall the stronger the weaker obey?

But think not, though these words we hear,
 That we mind one thing you say,
 For as long as a woman's possessed of a tear,
 Your power will vanish away.

Or if there should be so strange a wight,
 As not to be moved by a tear,
 Though much astonished at the sight,
 We still shall have nothing to fear.

We'll let them please themselves awhile,
 Upon their fancied sway;
 But as long as a woman's possessed of a smile,
 She will certainly have her own way.

Now ladies, since I've made it plain,
 That the case is really so,
 We'll even let them hold the rein,
 But we'll show them which way to go!

For ever since the world began,
 It has always been the way;
 And we'll manage it so, that the very last man
 Shall the very last woman obey.

Seeing, then, that it is only a work of supererogation to say anything at all about smiles and tears, in connection with the influence of the gentler sex over men—we will at once acknowledge their power, and, begging them to have mercy upon us, and “spare while they strike,” as the peace men say, we will go in search of other instructive aspects in which our title may present itself.

Smiles are generally the signs of happiness. I don't mean the bloated laughter of a tap-room, or the hyæna grin of sottish revelry. I don't mean the idiot leer of stupid brutality, or the ironic pout of sullen, bitter retrospect; but I mean the honest hearty smile of pure light-heartedness—I mean the bounding, joyous gleam of innocent delight.

I'm not a very early riser generally—being rather a late sitter-up—but still one morning, when I was visiting, with a friend, upon the banks of Loch Lomond, in Scotland. I contrived to turn out about two o'clock in the morning. My object was to ascend the huge mountain which overhangs the lake, and see the sunrise from the summit. I set out all alone—my companion being too lazy to get out of bed—and too fat to climb the mountain, even if he had got up. It was starlight when I commenced plodding up the shaggy breast of the hill—and I could see the eyes of heaven reflected in the clear surface of the lovely lake—like jewels sparkling on the bosom of a royal

maid. I trudged up higher and higher, through the chill and misty air, which seemed to hang upon the heather like a flimsy shroud. Wearing, and growing fagged, as the ascent grew steeper and more dangerous, I began to blame myself for venturing up alone; but I determined, having got thus far, to go on. Great yawning clefts and chasms full of mist, kept opening at my feet—and I could hear the yielding earth go tumbling down into the gulf below, just underneath my foothold. Ever and anon I could hear the scream of the raven or the hawk, as they woke up to quit their nests for prey; and as the morning dimly dawned, I saw the wild-goat browsing on the mountain side. Tired, and rather frightened at the solitude, solemnity, and danger of the place, I lay down upon my back, and looked into the sky. The stars were waning, and gently melting into the gathering light of coming day, and one by one they seemed to shut their twinkling eyes, and sink to sleep. But I had higher yet to climb, and was determined not to be beaten. The mountain dew was sparkling, as if some of the stars had lost their hold, and fallen from the sky. At length another hour's clambering brought me to the top, and as I stood alone, upon that heath-clad brow, I felt as though I was monarch of all I surveyed; and certainly I surveyed a most majestic prospect. Down at the mountain's base the glassy tide of fair Loch Lomond gleamed, and in the blushing of the early morning light I could descry its thirty verdant islands studding the surface, with their summer villa houses bowered in trees. The noble Clyde rolled its calm waters to the sea, between a shelving battlement of blue and sky-kissed hills—the clustering masts of Greenock harbour could be seen—and, further up, the hazy smoke of mighty Glasgow wreathed like a giant's breath into the air. Eastward the zig-zag track of the meandering Forth guided the eye to the turrets of Stirling, with its tales of history and associations of romance—and further on, where the waters widened, and where the white sails gleamed towards the German Ocean—the prouder rampart of the modern Athens reared its head. As I looked round through the grey morning twilight on the panorama, as it stretched around me, and scanned the abruptly jutting Bass Rock, as it seems to sprout out of the ocean bed—its whitened breast seemed to grow whiter still, and all around its jagged base the waters seemed on fire—the flitting sails flashed with a brightening light like wings of snowy plumage. The sky above was golden with excess of lustre, and all the east horizon seemed bathed and steeped in a ruddy flood of glory. At length the mellowing effluence that suffused the scene was pierced by a

thousand darting rays, and the bright orb of light came rising from behind the wave, and transfixed the day with a volley of effulgent arrows from his dazzling quiver—and darkness was stared out of countenance, when God said “let there be light.” Well, this I thought is a fit specimen of a smile, and when I saw that glorious sun ascending the bright canopy of blue, I fancied it was the smile of God upon the earth; and as each field and garden, each vale and mountain side, each stream and flower beamed more brightly underneath its light, I thought that this was nature smiling back again to God—a grateful creation, humbly conscious of its charms, smiling on a kind Creator, proudly scanning His own handiwork—a lovely world laughing in lightsome joy, as its mighty Maker looked complacently upon it, and seemed once more to call it “very good !” Yes, and though it was but a light fancy, when I saw the dew-drops drying from the petal of the heather-bell, and falling from the blade of grass, or from the thatch of the mountain hut, I could not help just thinking that it was like the hand of God wiping tears from off all faces !

And this is how the sun rises every day—this is how heaven smiles upon the earth—and how the earth smiles back to heaven—and yet on how much misery and sin the light pours down its rays ! The soaring lark is ever ready with its gladdening hymn to pour its matins forth, and praise its God. The flowers and the fields are vocal in His praise—the insects and the creeping glow-worm lay their meed of worship at His feet—and every living thing pays tribute, from the darting fishes in the caverns of the deep, to the “cattle on a thousand hills.” Yes, and no further ! Where is man, amidst all this universal adoration ? Where is the “immortal reptile man ?” Where is the proprietor of a deathless soul and an undying spirit, while this incense of nature’s praise ascends to heaven from the brute creation, and from the trees, and woods, and flowers ? Go, seek him in the mountain glade ; you’ll surely find him hymning his Creator’s praises there, beneath His own blue heaven. No, he is not there. I see the bird shake the dew from off its wing, and pour its anthems forth. I see the goats and lambkins skip and frisk about as though in grateful joy—I read the language of thanksgiving in the unfolding leaf and blushing flower—but I see no man there, nor hear the sound of human voice. Go seek him in yon village church, haply you’ll hear the voice of praise swelling from a worshipping assembly from within. No, he is not there. The linnet sits upon the belfry, and warbles a carol to the God who made it, and the sheep bleats with a free

contentment as it crops the clover from the gravestone mounds ; but there is no sound coming from the church, for as I struck my foot against the door a hollow echo from within, which scared the pretty bird, and startled him in his song, was all that could be heard. Go, seek him in the crowded cities where he has to toil for bread, and look among the churches and the chapels there, and there perhaps you'll find him praising God. No, he is not there ; the greater part of the chapels are locked up, and where they *are* open there are but few within, and those few are asleep. What are you looking for ? I want to find the haunts of men, and where they congregate in greatest numbers, to see how they thank God for all His gifts of goodness. O, come with me, says sage experience, and I will show you where to find man. Come down this street, this narrow dirty street, we shall find a sanctuary here, perhaps. Yes—here's the place. Do you see those three golden balls dangling over the door ? Yes. That's the sign of the religion of the place. Now, come and see the worship. There—do you see those two pale women tearing their hair by handfuls from each other's heads, and cursing at the God of heaven and earth, until the white foam hangs upon their lips ? Do you see that old hag twisting the coin from that screaming child, or that young wife dragging the wedding ring from her thin finger ? Do you see some laughing, and some weeping, some sighing, and some cursing, as they leave the place ? This is how they thank God for His gifts of goodness. Come again, down another street. There is another sanctuary yonder, a great gilt sign-board over it, and a glare of light within—a sickening, hot, and fevered fume greets us as we enter—for there is rather a full congregation. There you can hear their songs of praise ; they are roared out at the top of the voice, and accompanied by the waving of jugs and bottles, or the brandishing of pokers and fire shovels. The linnet used to wet his whistle with the dew which came down from above—these worshippers wet their's with something pumped up from below. But see how earnest they are in their worship. Some are so over-powered by it that they cannot stand upon their feet, but roll about upon the floor ; some fight and beat the image of God out of one another's faces ; some rant a lewd and filthy dialect of lust obscene, and all drink, and curse and swear. This is how *men* thank God for all His gifts of goodness. Would you see any more ? No, not if they are scenes like these. O, take me back to the wildest Alpine fastness, or the dreariest waste, where human footsteps never fell, nor blasted the fair innocence of nature ! Let me hear once more the lark's first anthem to the

morning sun, or the nightingale's late vesper to the moon and stars; but take me from this place, or I must die! One scene more, and you shall go. Come to man's home, and look upon a household group. There is but one dark room, and in it are a family of nine. Six pinched and hungry children huddle in a distant corner, and the eldest, a pale girl of twelve, is tremblingly attempting to keep her noisy brothers and sisters quiet. The principal objects in the room are a man and wife. The woman is lying on the floor, felled and bleeding from a blow inflicted by her lord and master, who swore before God and man, at God's own altar, to love and cherish her. She still holds her baby against her bruised and blackened bosom, and fixes her imploring eyes upon her husband. The fiendish hound, the wild and recreant hell-babe, stands scowling on her with clenched hands and glaring eyes, and swears he'll murder her if she stirs. O, stop your ears, ye mincing and ye dainty Reverends, who wear your lawn and cambric, and read your gentle homilies to your titled flocks, lest you should hear some "coarse expression," or some "disgusting word!" Let fall the curtain; but God help the wife and children!—for man seems to have but little sympathy with them. But you have seen a specimen of "family worship" now, and how man in his household thanks God for all His gifts of goodness! I wont show you any more, I wont take you to the schools where children are trained up to this religion, and taught in all the arts of theft and villany; but you can guess now the way in which immortal man worships God.

Thus the world, upon its tearful or cloudy side at least, seems to resemble a vast temple. All the appurtenances of worship are set forth, altars are raised, and every worshipper but one seems ready to lay his offering down. The birds, as we have seen, are prepared each with a song of praise; the beasts who prowl the forest seem willing to assist at the great service; the flowers breathe their fragrance, but the high priest is absent. Man, the lord and ruler of the whole creation, is away, too busy in the ante-room of hell, to come into the sanctuary of Heaven. The hastiest glance over this earth of our's will tell that

"Every prospect pleases,
And only Man is vile."

I have only just become conscious of having wandered rather widely from our title; but, perhaps it does not matter much. Still we may as well return to it a little more pointedly if we can.

It is a sign of the goodness of God that we have, in this dark world, smiles mixed up with tears.

A smile is always a lovely sight wherever it is met with. I don't profess to be very fond of small children—but I have often looked with pleasure on an infant's smile. There is such a sweet unconsciousness of all the evil and trouble of life about it—such a purity and innocence—such a melting, helpless confidence expressed in the wreathing lip and the dimpling cheek, that finds its way even to a bachelor's cold heart, and makes him cry—God help the little children. I don't want to be personal—but I do want to be practical, and to say something to come home to some one's heart. And, therefore, I ask if I am addressing any man who is rather too fond of his glass—my friend, have you ever seen your baby smile? And have you ever contrasted the brightness of that smile with the darkness of the shadow that hangs about the mother's face who nurses it? The child who does not know you, smiles and tries to call you father; but the wife, who knows you better, sighs and sheds a tear, and holds the infant closer to her bosom when you seek to take it from her arms. O, if the smiles of wife and child were dearer and more precious, men would come home sooner from their evening toil, and be more tender and affectionate as husbands and as fathers! If their tears were held more sacred, and if the tender fount from which they spring was better understood, they would not be wrung forth so often as they are by cruelty and wrong. Perhaps I have no right to dictate to my elders and superiors in this way; but I wish I could prevail on each husband here to ask himself the question, how many smiles his tender kindness may have lighted, and how many tears his cruel coldness has provoked.

It is far pleasanter to look upon the bright than on the dark side of things, but if our smiles are to be substantial in their source, they must be grafted, as it were, on tears. "There's no rose without a thorn," and if we would scent the fragrance of the flower we must brave the talons of its stem. But still we often let our tears flow at the little things, and let the great ones pass uncared for. It is but little use sighing and making a piece of work about our troubles and trials in business. If a man has got into a mess in this respect, don't let him sit down and lament in despair, but rouse himself and "at it again," in a cheerful, noble, and uncompromising spirit. I know that hard work, and hard earnings, and hard crusts, are all hard things; but after all we hear of the extreme destitution of our great cities, it cannot be denied that, as a general rule, poverty and crime go together, and that the one is deepened and made more terrible by the other. Those who are ever complaining of such abject want, are too often the self-same people whom we see spending their

money at the tippling shop, regardless of their homes and families ; and if there is any one thing more than another which blunts the edge of sympathy, and dries the tear of pity, it is to hear some able-bodied spendthrift puling about bad times and starvation ; when the money which might have filled the cupboard at home, and spread the daily meal before his wife and children, and warmed the hearth with a smiling blaze, has all been poured into the coffers of mine host at the George and Dragon, and been melted down into swipes and grog to be drunk on the premises, far, far away from home, with its cold hearthstone, its empty pantry, and its hungry broken-hearted inmates.

But there are deeper troubles than mere business difficulties, over which the heart *must* weep, and which had better have free vent. Turn into that great mill where the perpetual din of hissing engines, whirling wheels, and roaring machinery, stuns your unaccustomed ear. In one large room some fifty females are at work, and, as they ply their busy fingers, they hum a lively tune. But there is one among them there that does not sing, and seems, as she bends her pale face and raven hair over her work, to have her thoughts a long way off. She wears a black ribbon round her neck, and as her blithe companion next her turns to look at her she sees a hot tear fall upon her work ; she gives her that tender, womanly comfort that the female heart knows so well how to administer, and sure enough the poor girl needs it, for she has that morning printed the last fond kiss upon a dead sister's clay-cold brow, and ere she reaches home at night, the dear companion of her early days, the partner of her youthful cares and sorrows, and the living echo of her hopes and joys, will have been laid into the narrow grave, and carried to that "bourne from which no traveller returns." O, yes, there is a mystic eloquence full often in the silent tokens that call back the faces of the loved and lost ! there is a pensive wizardry in an empty chair, where once a mother sat ! there is a secret spell in a disused toy which only the mother, whose lost child was wont to wield it, can fully understand ! there is a touching sacred poetry clinging around the faithful dog, the favourite of some vanished friend, or perhaps the watchful guide of an old blind father, just gone to his last home ! Look at that silken thread twined round that lady's neck. Why does she wear it there ? O, there's a history in that fragile thread, which you and I must not profane, for know, that lady lost an only son a while ago, a fair bright boy of seven, and as he lay upon his bed of pain, he called his doting mother to his side, and bade her cut the curly locks from off his head, and as her trembling fingers obeyed the wish, the dying

child took one of the bright locks, the locks his mother used to toy and fondle with, with all a mother's pride, and tied that siken thread around it, and drawing with his wasted arms his mother's loving face to his, he hung the token round her neck, and as he kissed her tearful cheek with his cold lips, and tried to say "God bless you, mother," he fell asleep for ever. No, not for ever, but only until life and immortality are brought to light; he fell asleep until the resurrection morning. What wonder, then, that the lady keeps that thread around her neck, and cherishes the fair, bright curl deep in her bosom, close to her almost bursting heart!

But there is one more source from which our tears *ought* to flow oftener than they do. We may often see men and women weeping or grieving over their misfortunes, or their bereavements; but *how* often do we see them weeping over the sins of their own hearts? They are ready enough to lament over the world's ill-usage of themselves, but seldom shed a tear over their own ill-usage of a gracious God. The holiest and the iustest tears—the tears that most become us all, are tears of penitence. And if we only shed such tears a little oftener, the smiles that would succeed them would be brighter, for they would be the reflections of lighter hearts.

Within that mansion yonder is a brilliant circle; laughter and songs enliven the fair visitors. There is one member of that circle who quits the room for a short time; in half an hour she comes back, and takes her place again in the merry ring, to smile more happily, to laugh more freely, and to sing more joyously than before she left. If you had followed her you would have known the reason, for you would have seen her go into the library and take a book, and if you had peeped in you might have seen her on her knees pouring her heart before the throne of grace. If you had looked into the book you might have seen it open at the chapter about Lazarus' death and burial; and turning over the leaves you might see at such places as the 51st Psalm, where David asks for a clean heart and right spirit, you might see it stained with tears. Sit down and read that Bible. You shall read of tears there shed from a Saviour's pitying eyes over the souls of men; you shall read of tears of sympathy beside a brother's grave, and in a sister's cottage, and you shall read of tears of pity shed over the moral grave of lost Jerusalem; and you shall read of tears of blood—great drops of blood—falling upon the flowers of Gethsemane's garden, and welling upward from the heart of a grieving Saviour for the people's sins, and you shall read of dying tears—accompanied by cries of intercession floating upward into the ears of the

Lord God of Sabaoth, from the blood stained cross of Calvary, where Jesus bowed His head, cried, "It is finished, and gave up the ghost." And these tears were shed for you and me—this blood was spilt for us. Shall we, then, who have so ungratefully sinned against the loving Saviour, shall we withhold our penitential tears, or longer turn away from His appeals when He calls us to His cross?

"He wept, that we might weep,
Each sin demands a tear;
In Heaven alone no sin is found,
And there's no weeping there."

Yes, sin and tears must, and ought to go together; if we do not weep over our sins now, we shall weep over them for ever in the outer darkness, for there there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; no kindly hand to wipe our gushing eyes, no gentle voice to whisper comfort in our ears there. In that place of never-dying death, all will be grief and lamentation, the sacred ties of blood severed, mother will frown on child, and child will curse the mother; the son will turn upon his father, and say, "You led me to this place, and the first time you struck my mother in my presence, and taught me drunkenness and cruelty, I felt the first flushes of this quenchless flame." But, my fellow sinner, if you would escape this everlasting lamentation, shed you tears *now*; think of the foul ingratitude of all your sins, remember that each oath, each lie, each act of cruelty and wrong you ever did, drove a fresh nail into your Saviour's hands, plunged back the rankling spear into His side, and wreathed afresh the crown of thorns around His brow. I have often called to you before, in His dear name, to come and bring your sins and sorrows to His cross, and God grant it may not have been in vain! But supposing that it *has* been all in vain; supposing that I have pointed a blind and stiff-necked people to the Lamb of God; supposing none have listened hitherto to the voice of mercy and of love, let it not be so again to-day. By the tears of dying friends, by the tears of ruined souls, by the tears of guardian angels; and above all, by the tears of a crucified Redeemer, I implore you all to come to Jesus now. Come with a broken and a contrite heart; come thou outcast tenant of the roofless garret and the foetid cellar; come, thou foulest of the foul-mouthed group who throng the ale-house hall; come ye weary and heavy laden, ye hungry, and ye thirsty starvelings in the Lazar-house of woe; come ye hardy sons of toil, and you ye care-worn victims of misfortune dire; come from your haunts of darkest revelry, and burst the enthralling chain, and twine your close embrace around the

Saviour's cross. I invite you in His name, and in His name I promise you that you shall not be cast out. I promise you that, once havened in the ample bosom of His love, that none shall pluck you from His hand. O! take a friend's advice, and make a friend of Christ; He will never leave you, He will never, no, never forsake you! Behold yon bright and white-robed army, winding their jocund course up to the pearly portals of the skies. They knock and the door is opened, and the only watchword that they give is Christ crucified, and as they enter in through the gates into the city, escorted to their starry thrones by angel hosts, they are met upon the jasper threshold by Christ crowned! Crowned! but no more with thorns, but diademed with blazing glory, and panoplied with light as with a garment; and you may join them too. You, too, may sit upon a throne in yonder realm of bliss; you too may wave a palm, and join the hallelujahs of the skies; you too may fall into those ranks, and wear the virgin uniform of free salvation. The powers of death and hell shall never keep you back though Satan marshal them in all their power, for Christ has vanquished Satan, and has abolished death. It is to life, eternal life, he calls you, and life and immortality are brought to light by His Gospel. My brother, will you come? Take up the blood-stained banner of His cross, and bear it on throughout this vale of tears, until you change it for the blood-bought crown, when God shall wipe all tears away.

Battle, in His might, with each opposing foe, and Victory shall attend your standard, and conquest crown your strife. Cry, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ; but God forbid that I should *not* glory in that cross, for it was that cross alone that bore me up, and brought me out of great tribulation, and it was that cross alone that dragged me from the yawning jaws of hell and death, and struck the manacles from off my fettered soul. O, sinner!

Thinks I see thee standing amidst the multitude that no man can number, robed in thy shining garment of salvation, and wreathed in the radiance of perpetual smiles, and this is the exultant legacy of praise you leave your children on the earth:—

“Praise to the Conqueror, O! tell of His love,

In pity to mortals He came from above;

Who shall re-build for the tyrant his prison,—

The sceptre lies broken that fell from his hands

His dominion has ended, the Lord has arisen,

The helpless shall soon be released from their bands.

Praise the Redeemer, Almighty to save,

Emmanuel has triumphed o'er Death and the Grave!”

Who's that Knocking at the Door?

A LECTURE

BY THE REV. A. MURSELL,

IN THE

FREE TRADE HALL, DECEMBER 6TH, 1857.

I **FEEL** rather more disposed to apologise to you than I used to do for offering you such an *ad captandum* title, for I am bold enough to hope that you are quite as much disposed to listen to a lecture with a sensible title as a ridiculous one.

I used this topic once before, as a sort of means of knocking at the sympathies of working men, and persuading them to come out; but now that these sympathies are gained, I resort with more reluctance to these means. But I hope the address itself may be repeated with advantage, and that the title will be excused.

Now for our subject, "Who's that knocking at the door?" This question has been often asked by a great many people, under a great many different circumstances. There are few sounds which can more effectually bring a person's heart into his mouth than a knock at the door. There is eloquence and meaning in other things than words. Ask poor Mobbles, who every evening, when he leaves the warehouse, goes all round by Cheetham Hill, before he goes to his lodgings in Old Trafford, in order to cast his eye up at a particular chamber window, and to lay his right hand over his left waistcoat pocket, and murmur to himself, "sweet Marianne;" ask him if there is not eloquence and meaning in the back of a looking-glass, and in the distant view of a bed-post. Ask the swell with the red moustache and sandy whiskers, who walks in light French boots, to the violent irritation of his favourite corn, round and round St. Ann's Square, between one and two o'clock on a summer's afternoon (they call that *morning* in polite circles), ask him if there is not eloquence and meaning in the toss of a bonnet, the sweep of a crinoline, or rustle of a petticoat. Ask the lover who splits his trowsers twice a-week in going on his knees before the idol of his affections,

if there is not eloquence and meaning in a glance of the eye, or the curl of a lip. Ask the school boy who has got his thin summer jacket on, and has forgotten to stick a copy book up his back, if there is not eloquence and meaning in a stripe of the birch, or a cut of the cane. Ask the poor beggar boy, who faints for want of bread, if there is not eloquence and meaning in the chink of a copper on the pavement. Ask the pauper in the Union, if there is not eloquence and meaning in every button on the beadle's coat, and every pimple on his bottle-nose. Ask the little street urchin, if there is not eloquence and meaning in a policeman's tread, long before he shakes the collar of his jacket and tells him to "move on." Oh, yes, there is a language in other things than words, a language in a sigh—a language in a tear—a language in a footstep—a language in a look;—but in nothing is there a more telling, startling, and effective language than in a knock at the door.

We have alluded to our red-whiskered friend, out a-walking, let us just peep through the key-hole at him when he is in his lodgings at home. He looks very restless and uneasy, very impatient and disturbed, for he is anxiously expecting a new coat from the tailor's, and some doeskin pantaloons. They ought to have been home two hours ago, and he is growing angry and fidgety. At length there is a sound, and the street door opens and shuts. Our nervous friend rings the bell. "Mary, who was that knocking at the door?" "Please, sir, it was only the milk, and then somebody who wanted to know if Mr. Swipes lived here." *Exit* Mary. Another knock, and he goes to the door himself; it is the washerwoman with his last week's washing. "Aw, my linen, is it? Come in Mrs. Soapsuds." And then, of course, follows a protracted conversation about bleaching and clear starching, and a good deal of swearing on the part of the owner of the red whiskers, relative to a slight crease which he has discovered in the tail of one of his shirts. Another knock, and it is the tailor himself. Of course he is fearfully abused for his want of punctuality, and receives his lecture with all becoming meekness and resignation. We will not stay to assist at the toilet of our friend, but leave him to dress himself with the assistance of Mr. Snip, and to revel in the full effect of his irresistible garments.

Turn to another scene, perhaps equally illustrative of the power of a knock at the door. Two young gentlemen lodge together in the same house, on whom we will confer the names of Jones and Robinson. Jones has got a cold in his head, and determines to go to bed and have some gruel at ten o'clock. Just

as he comes to this conclusion, he hears a gentle tap at his door, and Robinson pokes in his head, and says, "O, Jones, just wait up for us for half an hour; there's a good fellow. I've lost my latch-key, and I want to go out. I'll be in by half-past nine, upon my honour." The kind hearted Jones consents. Half-past nine—half-past ten—eleven o'clock go by, and Jones's gruel has grown cold—and still no Robinson. He tries to read, but he grows so restless that he puts down the book, and listens for a knock at the door. He hears nothing but the dripping of the rain, and the whistling of the wind, and every now and then the distant, hollow barking of some wakeful watch-dog. Twelve—one—two o'clock strike, and still no Robinson. "I won't be more than half an hour, upon my honour," mutters Jones to himself, repeating the truant's parting words, "this is a pretty half an hour at all events! If he is not back by three o'clock, I'll go to bed." Just as three o'clock is striking, and Jones is lighting his bed-candle, the long expected rap at the door is heard. Down goes the indignant Jones to open the door. As soon as he has opened it, his anger is changed to wonder and dismay, for there is the prim and elegant Robinson, propped up against the doorpost by No. 72 of the D division, with his hat, his bran new hat, crushed over his face, and his clothes covered from head to foot with the contents of some adjacent gutter, where he was gently and peacefully reposing, when the watchman picked him up. Leaving friend Jones to take care of his unfortunate companion, we will turn in search of pleasanter adventures.

We might extend such illustrations of the significance of a knock at the door to an almost infinite degree. For example, we might watch the effect of the "boots's" knock at the chamber door of the sleepy traveller, at five o'clock in the morning. We might pause to see how the old gouty bachelor received the tax-gatherer's knock at the door, when he laid the income tax on five hundred pounds too much. We might sit for a little with the cook, the housemaid, and the tiger, in the servant's hall on a dark night, when some one knocked and tried the latch of the back door, and they thought their throats were cut already by the very sound. We might trace the effect upon the fierce old dowager of the knock of the poor, pale seamstress, who brings home the costly robe, which has cost the lady her money, and the poor girl her health and happiness. We might, by dint of a good deal of assurance, intrude into a young ladies' boarding school, and observe the thrilling effect of the postman's knock when he brings the billet-doux on a Valentine's Day, or study

the difference of reception given to the knock of the dancing master, and the knock of "that duck of a postman." O, I often wish I had been a postman, the ladies are so fond of them! And yet I don't know. The postman's knock is not always the har-binger of joy. True, he brings to us the messages of love; true, he helps to bring severed friends together, and often fills the heart with gladness at the sight of the writing of a well known and often fondled hand. But there's many a bright and laughing eye, that gleamed with joy when first it looked upon the letter, has shed a scalding and a bitter tear before that letter has been half read through. The postman brings news of vows plighted, but he brings the tidings too, sometimes, of vows forgotten and of pledges broken. His knock is often a spell which calls up joy and gladness to the heart, but it sometimes, by its wizardry, stirs a tempest in the mind, and whispers sadness to the soul. The father has often drawn a sigh, and the sister shed full many a tear, after reading a missive from abroad, to tell of the death of some dear son or brother. The postman brings black-edged letters as well as wedding-cards, and his double knock has sounded like a passing bell to the expectant wife, who hopes to hear of her returning husband from the war, but only hears of wounds and blood, and death; and puts on widow's weeds, those sable symbols of an aching heart.

You may generally guess what people want, by the manner in which they knock at your door. And a careful listener may often tell what sort of a person it is who is outside, without seeing them, simply from their knock. Little men generally knock very loud and a great many times. Fat men knock heavily and lumpishly. Tall, thin men knock slowly and rather indistinctly. Ladies always knock very fast, and generally continue without leaving off, until the door is opened. If a man is coming to present a bill, he knocks about three times very distinctly; if he is going to abuse you, he knocks as if he would break the door down; if he is going to complain or remonstrate about anything, he gives just one very heavy knock; if he is going to invite you out to dinner, he gives a merry little knock; and if he wants you to subscribe to a charity, he gives a meek and modest knock, and waits ten minutes before he dares to knock again. So that you may generally tell what a man wants, and be "at home" or "out" accordingly.

"Who's that knocking at the door?" I can imagine the question drawled listlessly out by some lazy exquisite, as he sips his coffee and smokes his meerschaum on the sofa. I can fancy it bellowed by some impatient Yankee, as he chews his quid and

spits upon the carpet. I can fancy it snarled forth by the busy merchant at his counting-house desk, but I will leave it to your own imaginations to give voices to all the askers of this question.

But, we repeat it again, there is much meaning in a knock. Look at that flickering light playing over the white curtain of that chamber window. Along the street, straw and soft substances are strewn to stifle the rattling of the wheels, and round the heavy knocker of the door, there is something twisted to muffle the sound. If we could look within that latticed window, if we could see into that lighted chamber, we should find, stretched upon a bed, fevered with pain, a wan and wasted form. A glassy vacancy hangs like a film about the sunken eye—a hectic glow flushes the hollow cheek—the restless fingers clutch at the coverlet, and the poor head tosses from side to side, in ceaseless perturbation. It is the crisis of a deadly fever, and the hour has come when life and death are struggling for the mastery. Beside the bed there leans a slender form, bending anxiously over the prostrate sufferer, the only human watcher in the room. Her rich dark tresses fall upon his pillow and fan his clammy forehead, as she tries to listen to his quick and fluttering breathing. She moves about the room so noiselessly, like a good angel gliding on some quiet errand of tenderness and mercy. She sprinkles cool and fragrant waters on his bed—she moistens his parched lips—and kissing lovingly, with true sisterly affection, her poor brother's brow, she listens anxiously for an expected sound. The watch upon the table seems to tick too fast, as it measures out the moments of the ebbing life. At length the sound for which she listened greets her attentive ear: it is a low, muffled, gentle knock at the door below. Gliding quietly but quickly down the stairs, with an anxious backward glance towards the speechless sufferer, she gently opens the door, and returns with the doctor to the bedside of her brother. Who shall describe the agony of suspense with which she watches every movement of the doctor's face, and how her heart flutters in caged anxiety, as she fancies that she reads, now a confirmation of her fears, and now an impulse to her hopes? Who shall describe her feelings of gratitude and joy when he whispers that all the danger is past, and that time and patience will bring him back to health? Who shall interpret the full emphasis and language of that doctor's knock, that brought the herald of such gladsome news?

But knockers at the door are sometimes refused admittance. I have heard good men tell of how the door has been banged in their faces, when they have been upon mercy's errand. I have

no doubt many of our city missionaries know what it is to be sent about their business, when they have knocked at the door of some ehurlish, sullen man, who could not appreciate their kindness and self-sacrifice. I dare say many a good man who has gone to read a verse or two of God's truth, or to speak a word or two of Christ's Gospel to some family that might have been the better for it—and, at least, who could not have been the worse for it—has been packed off with a flea in his ear, for wanting to do good.

But there is another messenger, better even than a city missionary, who often has to knock at a certain door many times before He can gain admittance. He has announced His presence and His desire to come in by the words, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me." He knocks not only at the door of our houses, but at the door of our hearts. If He were to send in His card, it would be a copy of the New Testament. There would be a picture of a cross upon it, and over it written in letters of His own blood, "Jesus of Nazareth." On a winter's night, when all is dark and gloomy, we bar the doors of our houses against the thief who would come to steal our money or our silver spoons. Now, Christ wants neither our money nor our spoons. Yet we bar up the door against Him as if He were an enemy; and though it is genial as July around us, it is dark and gloomy as December within the bleak dungeon of our hearts.

Even if the door were opened, He would find the place occupied before Him by a dark presence, which filled it up so that there was no room for Him to enter. This dreary visitor came to us long, long ago, and instead of knocking at the door, he opened it and walked in, and met with no resistance. When first he came, he looked so fair and beautiful that we were proud of such a guest. He stepped in lightly, and smiled joyously around. When he had entered, he shut the door, and it has never been thrown open since. Had he shown his card, some men would have expected a pitch-fork, and horns, and a tail upon it. But he has so many cards, and the first he shows to the working man is a picture of a beer-shop, or gaudy gin-palace. I do want to urge men to be sober and temperate, and not rob their wives and children of their daily bread, in order to make beasts of themselves, and paupers of their families. It is the devil who has barred the heart's door against the Holy Visitor from heaven; who leads the sot by the hand to the ale-house, and fevers his brains with madness, and steels his heart with

cruelty. It is the devil who nerves the fiendish blow that bruises the gentle bosom of a wife, and prompts the oath that sinks like hellish poison into the listening children's ears. It is the devil who breeds the want and poverty which send the chairs and tables to the pawn-shop, and drive the hungry little ones naked to the streets. It is the devil who arranges all these slippery stepping-stones across the stream of life, and lures, by fatal and by sure degrees, the heedless passenger to eternal ruin. Well, then, if there are any here who have submitted to his guidance—if there is any heart which has felt the fettering weight of his chain, and longs to break it off—let him only listen to that Knocker at the door of his hard heart, and draw back the iron bolts—expel the false intruder, and let the King of Glory in. My brother, Jesus Christ is standing on the threshold, and yet you wont admit Him. See, he holds to you His hands, and they are pierced with nails—the footsteps of His track are marked with blood. His side is gashed with a cruel spear-thrust, and His brow is torn and mangled with a crown of thorns. Take the Bible and read His life, and at every verse you will hear Him knocking louder and louder at the door. Read of His conflict with the devil on the Mount, and of His triumph while the angels ministered round about Him, and you will hear Him knock. Read of His miracles and deeds of love—His feeding the hungry—His healing the sick—His raising the dead, and you will hear Him knock again. Read of His tears over lost Jerusalem—His passionate lament—His sorrow beside Lazarus' grave—His gentleness to the troubled sisters—and all the deeds of His great love for man, and you will hear Him knock again. Read His earnest entreaties to the vilest and the worst of sinners, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and His promise that "him that cometh He will in no wise cast out," and you will hear Him knock again. Read of His agony in the garden of Gethsemane, when the weight of Jehovah's frown, and the bitterness of the cup, whose deepest dregs he drank, wrung from His awful brow great drops of blood, and you will hear Him knock again. Read of His trial—of His condemnation and His death—of His prayer, while hanging on the cross, for the yelling crowd who nailed Him there, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!"—and think that all this was done to save our souls from death, and to pave the sinner's path to heaven, and you will hear Him knock again. Yes, He is knocking earnestly and loud. And why does He wish to enter? In order that He may turn our headlong footsteps towards the path

of life. In order that, with His own rich blood, He may wash our guilty souls, and make them white as snow. In order that He may lead the wretched to living fountains of waters, where God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. In order that He may clothe the naked with the spotless robe of His own perfect righteousness. In order that He may feed the hungry with the bread of life that cometh down from heaven. In order that He may heal the sick with the leaves of the tree which are for the healing of the nations; and in order that He may prepare for the homeless a place in the many mansions of His Father's house. Will you let Him in? You may not think so, now; but you will repent it if you do not. If you can live without Him, you cannot die without Him. If you admit Him *now*, you will find a place at that great marriage feast, when the bridegroom and the bride shall sit down together, and the chamber shall be crowded with the guests. But if you will not hear Him, as he knocks for entrance, He will not hear your knocking when you come to seek admission to His table. For, at that great festival, when He smiles upon the travail of His soul, the song which circles round the board shall be suspended, as approaching footsteps, like the tread of wanderers groping in the dark, is heard outside the door, and an imploring voice sounds wailing from without, "Lord, Lord, open unto us!" The smile upon the Saviour's face shall deepen to an awful scowl, and His voice will thunder forth the answer, "I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity." Now, these rejected knockers at the door will be just the very men who have turned away from the Saviour's knocking at their hearts. Shall it be, my friends, that any of us are to be among that number? O, God forbid! For it will be fearful to be banished from His presence, and, as He shuts the heavenly gates against us, to be reminded of our deep ingratitude by the Divine reproach, "I was a stranger and ye took me not in."

But some of us are very hard of hearing. We are as deaf as posts. Sin has stuffed cotton-wool into our ears, and the devil has rammed it tight with the handle of his fork, so that we can't hear the knocking, be it ever so earnest. Whenever we begin to think a little, and our minds have time to be quiet and reflect, Satan begins to cut his infernal capers, and to make such an intolerable racket, that it drowns the knocking at the door. It does not suit his purpose to let us think. He is afraid we should begin to find out what fools we are to give him the easy chair, and let him smoke his pipe in the chimney-corner of our hearts, and turn our best room out of the window, and do just as he

likes with all our parlour furniture. So, whenever he sees us at all disposed to be thoughtful, he grows uneasy. Whenever the tempest of passion for a moment subsides, and conscience begins to wake from her long slumber, he begins to poke the fire of our evil appetites, and to make a fearful clatter with the fire-irons, for fear we should hear the knocking at the door. If conscience just manages to make us ask the question, "Who's that knocking at the door?" this ever restless, active, devilish guest of ours will say, "O, it's nothing but the wind; don't you begin croaking; come to the 'Pig-jobbers' Arms,' and have a glass of grog." And so it is, that man is led captive by the devil at his will. So it is that we submit to have a halter noosed about our necks, to be led here and there and everywhere at the caprice of the great enemy of souls. Satan hates men to be thoughtful, and would do all he can to cripple the mind. I know the enemies of Christ's Gospel say that it puts a curb upon the human understanding, and prevents men from thinking for themselves; but that's a lie; that's one of Satan's falsehoods. Why, when the foul deceiver came crawling in the shape of a slimy snake from amongst the cabbage leaves in Eden, and hissed his damnable guile into our fair mother's ear, didn't he say that we should be as gods, knowing good from evil? But he didn't tell us all the truth, and say, besides, that we should be as fools, choosing the evil instead of the good. And so, in the same way, would the victims of the devil's malice try to make us believe that Christianity would restrain us from thinking. I should like to know what nations have been the most enlightened—those where Christianity has flourished, or those where the devil has had it all to himself? Don't believe it. If any man tries to persuade you that Christianity would paralyze the understanding, bid him tell that to the marines. Tell him that the very fact of his saying so shows that Satan has crushed his understanding altogether, and that if he has any mind at all, it has broken its leg and goes upon crutches. Did Christianity cripple the mind of Paul? Did it cripple the mind of Luther? Did it cripple the mind of John Knox? Did it cripple the mind of Milton, when he wrote "Paradise Lost?" or that of Bunyan, when he dreamed the "Pilgrim's Progress?" O, tell us not, ye carpers at God's truth, that the human mind is curbed by the Gospel of Christ! No, it is spurred onward to the ascent of heights that your grovelling fancy never could ascend—to the unravelling of depths your puling logic cannot penetrate—to the survey of breadths whose vast expanse your eye hath never seen. And I tell you that the poor cottager, who sees her Saviour's likeness

photographed in the New Testament, sees a picture fairer than any in the Art Treasures Exhibition, and grasps a theme sublimer than any that has absorbed the thought of the philosopher, or flooded the fancy of the poet. The minstrel and the man of letters may be praised on earth, and have his name blazoned in books and carved on marble monuments; but the poor widow, who draws her philosophy from the Bible, and her poesy from the cross, has her memoirs recorded in the skies, and her name written in the book of life.

“O, happy peasant! O, unhappy bard!
 His the mere tinsel—her’s the bright reward.
 He praised, perhaps, for ages yet to come;
 She never heard of half a mile from home.
 He lost in errors his vain heart prefers;
 She safe in the simplicity of hers.”

I know I have been sermonising a good deal in these remarks, but I hope I have not been very prosy. If I have tired you, I beg your pardon, and hope you will excuse me. But I venture to hope I have not sermonised too much to please you. There are people who say that working men are not prepared to listen to the Gospel, and that you must give it them by degrees; first giving morsels of common things, then scraps of cold morality, and then homœopathic doses of Christian truth; just as people feed a half-starved dog—very sparingly at first, and more and more by degrees. But, for my own part, I don’t believe in it. I will not be a party to doing working men so gross an injustice as to suppose that they cannot and will not appreciate the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It puts me in mind of a story that you have no doubt often heard, of a gentleman who gave a poor hungry beggar a halfpenny, and then told him not to make a beast of himself, and spend it all at once. If God has given me a message of good news to tell to my dying fellow-men, I cannot consent to break the tidings gradually, while I see thousands sinking daily in spiritual death for want of the message which I have to deliver. I know I need the *whole* Gospel for myself, and I know my fellow-men need the whole Gospel too. And so, by God’s help, I *will* spend all He has given me at once, and tell you *all* the news of the Saviour’s death. I tell you in the name of Him who is now knocking at the door of your heart, that He died to save you, and is now waiting to be gracious. I tell the drunkard that there is a way by which his conscience may be lightened, his heart softened, and his guilt cancelled. I tell the thief that the same visitor who knocks at

the heart of the best saint on earth is knocking at the door of *his*, and will enter in if he will only open, and bring His great sal·a·tion with Him. I point the vilest criminal that Satan ever chained, and sin ever blackened, to the self-same cross to which prophets, and priests, and bishops may repair. I tell you *all* that the fountain is open for the chief of sinners—that the blood can wash away the foulest stains—and that the robe of righteousness shall clothe the meanest applicant. I take my stand, then, this day beside that fountain; and in Christ's stead, as though God did beseech you by me, I pray you to be reconciled to God. Christ has perhaps knocked so long that He has grown weary at your coldness. Well, then, begin you and knock at His Door, and He will not treat you as you have treated him. He will let you in. Do you ask how you must knock? I answer, knock by constant and earnest prayer. Knock in the morning when you rise. Knock every night before you close your eyes to sleep. Think of how long he has knocked at *your* door, and do you keep on until He lets you in. If a man comes to *your* door to give you a present, or to pay your debts for you, you would let him in fast enough, I'll engage. Yet Christ, who has come for the express purpose of paying off the heaviest debt that ever you incurred, a debt which, if left unpaid, will plunge you into prison throughout all eternity, you suffer to stand knocking day by day, and year by year, without admission. Is it not ungrateful? Is this the way in which any of us should like to be treated? Do try and humble your pride by prayer and confession. I am not talking cant, I am only asking you to do what would make you happy here, and happier still hereafter. You see I am not at all falling in with those folks who say that working men are not prepared for the Gospel, and that they must be dosed with spoon-meat and stuff before they will listen to the name of Jesus Christ. What is the use of my coming here and bawling about virtue and vice, and calling you a pack of miserable sinners, unless I mention the only name which can do you good—the only name which can save or succour you? I say to every man, whoever he be—working man or gentleman—"Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." I say this, because God knows no difference between one man and another. I say it because Christ died for the artisans of Ancoats as well as the nabobs in Victoria Park. I say it because Tom Styles and Billy Ruffin are as welcome to come to Christ as Lord Muntanhed and Sir Diggory Dolittle. I say it because I have no sympathy with the M.P. who moved for a select committee to appoint one heaven

for all men with incomes over three hundred a year, and another for the poor with ten shillings a week.

Come, then, in the name of God, and take the Saviour at his word, when he invites you to his cross.

Behold a stranger at the door,
He gently knocks—has knock'd before;
Has waited long—is waiting still;
You use no other friend so ill.

Rise, touched with gratitude divine,
Turn out His enemy and thine;
Turn out that hateful monster, sin,
And let the heavenly stranger in.

Admit Him, for the human breast
Ne'er entertained so kind a guest;
No mortal tongue their joys can tell,
With whom He condescends to dwell.

Sovereign of souls! Thou Prince of Peace!
O may Thy gentle reign increase!
Throw wide the door, each willing mind,
And be His empire all mankind!

God's law lays all beneath its curse—Christ's Gospel gives to all its free salvation.

There are some here, I dare say, who never pray. Just try the experiment to-night, before you go to bed. It can't hurt you, and it may do you good. Prayer is not salvation, yet we must all pray. That must be your way of knocking at Christ's door. Remember, He did not go away after the first knock, nor yet the second, but He knocked hundreds of times, and is sometimes knocking still; so, if you don't get an answer all at once, knock again to-morrow—knock loud and earnestly—keep on—knock away; and not until the footsteps of the heavenly messenger are heard within—not until the welcoming and inviting voices of the Spirit and the bride are heard—not until your listening ears are greeted by the songs of angels heralding your approach—not until the Son of God himself draws back the bolts and flings wide the everlasting doors—not until you sit down in the white robe, and wave the victor's palm, and feel the hand of God himself wiping all tears from your eyes—not until you are singing amidst the splendours of the perfect day, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever," must you stop that "knocking at the door!"

Home!

A LECTURE

BY THE REV. A. MURSELL,

IN THE

FREE TRADE HALL, DECEMBER 13TH, 1857.

THE original title of this address, when it was delivered many months ago, elsewhere, was taken from the popular local poem, "Come Whoam to thy Childer an' Me," but as this was only used as a catch word to arrest attention, I saw no reason to preserve it.

I have already intimated it as one guiding object of these addresses, to bring ministers and "outsiders" a little more familiarly together, or at least take a step in that direction.

It is always best to have some definite end in view in addresses of this sort, and to state it plainly at the outset, and so, both for your guidance and my own, I may as well say that what I want to try to do in this lecture is to create a stronger love of home, and greater respect for family ties, as wife, children, and relations, in the minds of any who may be a little in the habit of spending, selfishly, at a distance from home, in the public-house or elsewhere, those wages or earnings which ought to be shared at home with the wife and children, and which ought to be devoted to increase the comforts of the cottage, and not to help to paint a new sign or fix a new beer-engine at the Pig and Whistle pot-house.

It is just possible that there are none here who are thus in the habit of neglecting the claims of home and family—I hope they wont feel insulted at these remarks being made in their hearing, for it is to be hoped that they may be persuaded by them to use their influence in respect to this matter with those who really need it.

I am afraid, I must confess, that it is rather an impudent thing for a young man with no wife or family, and, what's more,

with precious little prospect of ever having either, to get up to give advice to fathers of families—but I hope you will excuse the immodesty of it, as it is only a lesson of common humanity that I want to press upon your attention.

In trying, by any indirect influences which these meetings may have upon the poorest of the poor, who from indifference or other natural reasons refuse to attend them—in trying to prove to those who live in the meanest and most abject abodes of poverty, that religion may make even *their* homes happy, I am setting myself rather a thankless task, because it forces me to preach contentment to those who are in want of the commonest comforts of life: and I know how easy it is for those who have these comforts to lecture and upbraid with discontent those who have them not. But in order to show you that I do not speak in ignorance of the misery that exists in the world, I shall take the liberty of reading an extract from the report of Dr. Letheby, the officer of health to the Sanitary Commission of London, reported in the *Times*. I do this, not for the information of my working friends so much as for the special entertainment and enlightenment of certain friends who will, perhaps, believe from such a source, what they would not credit on my bare authority. I happened, in a sermon the other day, to make some slight allusion to certain scenes of vice and wretchedness, and was charged with overdrawing the picture, and offending fastidious ears with coarse details which went beyond the truth. Now, let us see whether the plain statement of this Dr. Letheby, who has seen with his own eyes what he describes, is very likely to be easily overdrawn; for, as we are going to speak of our English homes, it is as well to know what sort of paradises we have to talk about. I dare say lots of folks will be disgusted, but I can't help that. Dr. Letheby says:—

“I have also been at much pains, during the last three months, to ascertain the precise conditions of the dwellings, the habits, and the diseases of the poor. In 1,989 of these rooms—all, in fact, that are at present inhabited—there are 5,791 inmates, belonging to 1,576 families; and, to say nothing of the too frequent occurrence of what may be regarded as a necessitous overcrowding, where the husband, the wife, and young family of four or five children, are cramped into a miserably small and ill-conditioned room, there are numerous instances where adults of both sexes, belonging to different families, are lodged in the same room, regardless of all the common decencies of life, and where from three to five adults, men and women, besides a train or two of children, are accustomed to herd together like brute beasts or savages—where all the offices of nature are performed in the most public and offensive manner, and where every human instinct of propriety and

decency are smothered. Like my predecessor, I have seen grown persons of both sexes sleeping in common with their parents; brothers and sisters, and cousins, and even the casual acquaintance of a day's tramp, occupying the same bed of filthy rags or straw; a woman suffering in travail, in the midst of males and females of different families that tenant the same room—where birth and death go hand in hand—where the child but newly born, the patient cast down with fever, and the corpse waiting for interment, have no separation from each other or from the rest of the inmates. Such instances as these, and I might add others of even more extreme debasement, are not uncommon within the walls of this city; and though they call loudly for interference, yet I hardly know how the powers of this commission can be best exercised in suppressing them.

"In the ward of Bishopsgate, a little above Houndsditch, there is a narrow passage called Rose-alley, which leads from the main thoroughfare into New Street. I visited the back room on the ground floor of No. 5. I found it occupied by one man, two women, and two children, and in it was the dead body of a poor girl, who had died in childbirth a few days before. The body was stretched out on the bare floor without shroud or coffin. There it lay in the midst of the living, and we may well ask how it can be otherwise than that the human heart should be deadened to all the gentler feelings of our nature, when such sights as these are of common occurrence?

"So close and unwholesome is the atmosphere of some of the rooms, that I have endeavoured to ascertain by chemical means, whether it does not contain some peculiar product of decomposition that gives to it its foul odour and its rare powers of engendering disease. I find that it is not only deficient in the due proportion of oxygen, but it contains three times the usual amount of carbonic acid, besides a quantity of aqueous vapour charged with alkaline matter that stinks abominably. This is, doubtless, the product of putrefaction and of the various fœtid and stagnant exhalations that pollute the air of the place. In many of my former reports, and in those of my predecessor, your attention has been drawn to this pestilential source of disease, and to the consequence of heaping human beings into such contracted localities; and I again revert to it because of its great importance, not merely that it perpetuates fever and the allied disorders, but because there stalks side by side with this pestilence a yet deadlier presence, blighting the moral existence of a rising population, rendering their hearts hopeless, their acts ruffianly and incestuous, and scattering, while society averts her eye, the retributive seeds of increase for crime, turbulence, and pauperism."

Such are the homes of thousands of Queen Victoria's subjects, in this nineteenth century of progress.

Now it is hard to tell a man whose life is spent in dens like these that he ought to be contented with the lot which God has given him. But God never willed it that any of his creatures should live in such haunts as these, and therefore it does not

become any man who lives in this condition to be contented with it. It is crime, and drunkenness, and vice which has formed these earthly hells; and it is gross neglect and cruel indifference on the part of rich and influential men which has suffered them to thicken and increase. If people were not so disgustingly and selfishly refined and fastidious—if they would believe a tale of woe, and sympathise with it when they hear it, instead of calling it coarse and vulgar when it is related to them, and turning up their noses at those who dare to tell it—then there would be more practical effort put forth to further the cause of humanity—and to let a sunbeam of cleanliness and intelligence fall upon the pauper's home. If there were more Christians like old John Howard, who did not disdain to penetrate the cellars of the beggar or the criminal, and whose manly heart did not shudder to approach the filthy bed on which was stretched the victim of disease, or the wasting prey of death—if there were more angels of mercy, with large and loving hearts, who would speak a word of kindness to those who need it most, and float a gospel promise on the noisome air which reeks from the haunts of poverty and crime—if there were more Christians of this sort, there would be less occasion, bye and bye, for Boards of Health to send their officers to ferret out the causes why humanity is so debased and wretched.

Magistrates are, to no small degree, responsible for the poor man's dislike of home. Those in high places should learn to be considerate of his temptations, and not too hastily condemn him. There is far more credit due to a poor man for keeping out of trouble, than to a rich one; and the hateful names by which the menials of the law will often banter the poor man who has transgressed it, under strong temptation, only tend to harden him in crime, and steel his heart against religion and philanthropy.

I have turned down the leaf of Charles Dickens' "Chimes," at a scene which I should like, if you will allow me, just to read to you. After describing a dinner given by a country magistrate to his tenantry, he introduces upon the scene a returned convict, whom he calls Will Fern:—

"Gentlefolks—you've drunk—the labourer—look at *me*. Just come from gaol, and neither for the first time, nor yet the second, nor yet the third nor fourth.

"Look at *me*—you see I'm at my worst. Beyond all hurt or harm—beyond your help—for the time when your kind words or kind actions could have done *me* good, is gone with the scent of last year's beans and clover on the air.

"I've lived many a year in this place. You may see the cottage from the sunk fence over yonder. I've seen the ladies draw it in their books a hundred times. It looks well in a picter, I've heerd say, but there an't weather in picters, and may be 'tis fitter for that than for a place to live in.

"'Tis harder than you think for to grow commonly decent in such a place. That I grow'd up a man and not a brute, is saying something for me, as I was then.

"I dragged on somehow—neither me nor any other man knows how but so heavy, that I couldn't put a cheerful face upon it, nor make believe that I was any other than what I was.

"Now, gentlemen—you gentlemen that sits at sessions—when you see a man with discontent writ on his face, you says to one another: 'he's suspicious, I has my doubts,' says you, 'about Will Fern. Watch that fellow!' I don't say, gentlemen, that it an't quite nat'ral, but I say 'tis so; and from that hour, whatever Will Fern does or lets alone—all one—it goes against him.

"Now gentlemen, see how your laws are made to trap and hunt us, when we're brought to this. I tries to live elsewhere. And I'm a vagabond. To gaol with him! I comes back here. I goes a nutting in your woods, and breaks a timber branch or two. To gaol with him! One of your keepers sees me in the broad day, near my own patch of garden, with a gun. To gaol with him! I has a nat'ral angry word with that man when I'm free again. To gaol with him! I cuts a stick. To gaol with him! I eats a rotten apple or a turnip. To gaol with him! It's twenty mile away; and coming back I begs a trifle on the road. To gaol with him! At last, the constable—the keeper—anybody—finds me anywhere, a doing anything. To gaol with him, for he's a vagrant, and a gaol-bird known; and gaol's the only home he's got.

"Do I say this to serve *my* cause? Who can give me back my liberty? Who can give me back my good name? Who can give me back my innocent niece? Not all the lords and ladies in wide England. But gentlemen, gentlemen, dealing with other folk like me, begin at the right end. Give us, in mercy, better homes when we're a lying in our cradles; give us better food when we're a working for our lives; give us kinder laws to bring us back, when we're a going wrong; and don't set gaol, gaol, gaol, afore us, everywhere we turn. There an't a condescension you can show the labourer then that he wont take as ready and as grateful as a man can be; for he has a patient, peaceful, willing heart. But you must put his rightful spirit in him first; for whether he's a wreck and ruin, such as me, or is like one of them that stand here now, his spirit is divided from you at this time. Bring it back, gentlefolks—bring it back! Bring it back, afore the day comes when even his Bible changes in his altered mind, and the words seem to him to read, as they have sometimes read in my own eyes, in gaol: 'Whither thou goest I *cannot* go; where thou lodgest I do *not* lodge. Thy people are *not* my people, nor thy God my God.'"

With such influences as these to wean his heart from home

and its affections, none of the crimes we read and hear of can be called *unnatural*. Let Christians, before they condemn the criminal who sins against the laws, just think of all his temptations, and see if crime is not their natural outgrowth. The poor man's one idea is, how to feed his family, and to keep his own body and soul together. Is it such an unnatural thing that he should be sometimes sullen and desperate—that the passions of his heart should sometimes break out in rebellion against the laws of God and man, or in some cruel act of violence or even blood? Why, there are great fat, high-fed country squires and Members of Parliament (and priests and bishops too, only it's not polite to say so) who can be as crusty as their own port wine, if their boozing and their gluttony only give them a touch of the gout in the big toe; and is it a wonder then, that the poor man, when he stands face to face with famine or starvation—when he sees wife and children sickening for want of bread, should sometimes become cruel, reckless, and despairing? “Hedge up any son or daughter of our mighty mother within narrow range, and bind the prisoner to one idea, and foster it by servile worship on the part of the few timid and designing people whose interest it is to cherish it; and what is nature to the willing captive who has never soared away upon the wings of a free mind to see it in all its comprehensive truth?”

“Alas, are there so few things in this world of ours, most unnatural, and yet most natural in being so! Hear the magistrate or judge admonish the *unnatural* outcasts of society—unnatural in brutal habits—unnatural in want of decency—unnatural in setting aside and confounding every distinction between good and evil—unnatural in recklessness, in ignorance, in vice, in mind, in looks, in everything! But follow the good clergyman, city missionary, or doctor, who, with their lives imperilled by every breath they draw, go down into these dens, lying within the echoes of our carriage wheels, and daily tread upon the pavement stones. Look round upon this world of odious sights—millions of immortal creatures have no other world on earth—at the lightest mention of which humanity revolts, and dainty delicacy, living in the next street, stops her ears and lisps, ‘I don’t believe it!’ Breathe the polluted air, foul and fœtid with every impurity which is prejudicial to health and life—and have every sense, conferred upon our nature for its good, offended, sickened, and disgusted, and made a channel by which misery and death alone can enter. Vainly attempt to think of any simple plant, or flower, or wholesome weed, that, set in this noisome bed, could have its natural growth, or put its little

petals forth to heaven as God designed it—and then, calling forth some ghastly child, with stunted form and wicked face, hold forth upon its unnatural sinfulness, and lament its being so far and so early estranged from heaven; but think a little, of its having been conceived, and bred, and born in hell!

“Those who study the natural sciences, and bring them to bear upon the health of man, tell us that, if the noxious particles that constitute vitiated air were made palpable to the sight, we should see them hovering over such haunts, and gradually rolling on to corrupt the better portions of a town. But if the *moral* pestilence that rises with them, and, in the eternal laws of outraged nature, are inseparable from them, how terrible the revelation! Then should we see that, where we generate disease to strike our children down, and entail itself on unborn generations—there also do we generate, by the same certain process, a long train of nameless sins which inundate our gaols and lazar-houses, and make our convict-ships swim deep, and rēll across the seas, and overrun vast continents with crime—there also do we generate infancy that knows no innocence, youth without modesty or shame, blasted old age that is a scandal on the form we bear. Unnatural humanity! When we shall gather grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles; when we shall reap rich harvests from the offal in the byeways of our wicked cities, and roses bloom in the fat churchyards which they cherish—then we may look for *natural* humanity, and find it growing from such seed.

“O, for a good spirit to take the house-tops off with a more potent and benignant hand than the lame demon in the tale, and show a Christian people what dark shapes issue from amongst their homes to swell the retinue of the destroying angel, as he moves forth among them—for only one night’s view of the pale phantoms rising from the scenes of our too long neglect, and from the thick and sullen air where vice and fever propagate together, raining the tremendous social retributions which are ever pouring down, and ever coming thicker. Bright and blest the morning that should rise on such a night; for men, delayed no more by stumbling-blocks of their own making, which are but specks of dust on the path between them and eternity, would apply themselves like common creatures of one common origin, owning one common duty to the common Father of one common family, and all tending to one common end, to make *our* common world a happier place.”

I have said thus much about the causes of want, to show that I am not talking in ignorance of its terrors. And now,

not to tire you out, let me address the rest of my remarks, which will only last a very few minutes, to my subject, and to working men.

"Be it ever so humble—there's no place like home." And I believe there are times when the poorest and the worst of men think so.

But perhaps there may be some here who do not always find home quite as comfortable as they could wish. Your tea is not ready—the fire is gone out—the chips are damp with which your wife is trying to light another—the bellows are broken, and you can't blow up the fire—the kettle will be more than an hour before it boils—and your missus looks as if she were in no better humour than the kettle, except that she seems much more inclined to boil over than it does. Well, it must be confessed that these are annoyances, and that this is not a very pleasant reception after a hard day's work; but it can't mend matters to go into a passion about it; so don't begin to swear, and beat and abuse your wife; it may, or it may not be her fault that things are not in better order, but a little forbearance and patience, and a few kind words, will do far more to bring about an improvement than blows or curses. I'll answer for it you will find a nearer way to your wife's heart by smiles and kindness than by cruelty or coldness. If she is not always up to the mark, try and make allowance for the trouble and care she has had while you have been away at work. There's little Harry been and tumbled into the rain-water tub, and half drowned himself, and she has had to put him a dry shirt and pinafore on; and while she was attending to him, Sarah Jane tore her frock on a tenpenny nail in the washhouse, and the poor wife has had to mend the rent; then young Bob, in the cradle there, has been so cross all day that it has been hard work to keep him still and get him to sleep, for Martha Ann has pitched him out of the cradle into the dripping pan, and anointed his infant head with the fat of the rasher of bacon which has been put by for your supper when you came home. So that you see it is very possible that your good wife may have quite as much reason to be cross as you.

At all events, never be such a base coward as to lift a hand to strike her; for the monster who would beat a woman is not likely to have much love for home or its endearments—he has, dethroned the idol, and profaned the household goddess who sanctifies and brightens the hearthstone with her presence. Let husbands and wives bear a little with each other instead of quarrelling, and they will find that a *hovel* lit with smiles is better than a *palace* darkened and clouded with frowns.

The love of home, in its wider or more restricted sense, is an element essential to a noble, honest mind. It nestles in the love of country and of liberty. A Briton never feels so free and bounding as in his native land. He is in the chosen asylum of freedom, and he feels that "Britons never shall be slaves."

It nestles in the spirit of contentment under ills and troubles. Some of you, possibly, may remember hearing Mr. Punshon, in his magnificent lecture the other day, tell us how rare old John Bunyan spoke of being taken *home* to prison. What was it made that solitary cell a home to him? Why, freedom was there, although the massive doors were triple-locked and barred, and sullen halberdiers, with gleaming axes, stood sentinel before the ponderous gates. Yes, freedom was there with Bunyan in the prison, and he felt at home—for Bunyan had a key by which he let in freedom to his dungeon—a key he treasured in his bosom, and which none could pluck away—a golden key, before whose power the darkest cavern could be lighted up with heavenly lustre. That key was prayer—prayer, that stealthy postman who bears our correspondence up to the celestial city—prayer, that invisible telegraph, whose electric pulses throb between the heart of sinful man and the heart of sinless Christ—prayer, that authorised Prometheus whose deft and nimble fingers, dipped in the blood of sprinkling, can draw the Spirit's choicest and selectest beams from heaven. Yes! Bunyan was in prison, but he was at home; he had the liberty of soul which men nor devils could not take away; he had a ticket of leave from God to wander to the delectable mountains, and linger on the pavements of the Palace Beautiful. And you, my brother, however dark your cottage—be it the slimiest cellar in the foulest alley in the city; be it shared with all the most squalid wretches, from whose hearts and faces the cloven foot of Satan has long since stamped out the faintest vestige of God's holy image—you shall find even such a den a home to you; aye, and a home you would not exchange for the feasting-chamber of a prince, if you will only bear this golden key of prayer within your bosom, and with the closing shades of night, and the dawning gloom of morning, look up in confidence and faith to your Father who is in heaven.

It nestles in the love of God. Make your home a sanctuary to God, and, I care not where it is, it will be happy.

"Moss-grown the thatch, of rough-sawn elm the door,
And worn in many a dint the earthen floor,
Whilst the mud wall, as conscious of decay,
Leans tow'rd's the broken bank where once it lay;—

Yet here, not sordid rags or filth-fine place,
 But the poor cottage wears an humble grace.
 There, when the last declining beams of day
 Beside the chimney in bright chequers play,
 The deep rich gleam of parting light is spread
 Around that ancient matron's hoary head;
 Age bows that form, and early toil and care
 Have plough'd that face, and traced deep furrows there;
 And Poverty has clothed in meanest guise—
 But mark and read the language of those eyes!
 Hope there still lights a mild, not youthful ray,
 The last calm smile of Autumn's closing day;
 And Faith's fix'd star dispels each trace of gloom,
 Though the foot totters near the opening tomb;
 And Charity has still a mite in store,
 A hand to aid, though poorest of the poor.
 The orphan babe, her look of kindness cheers,
 Her voice can check the widow's falling tears,
 Her simple skill the throb of pain assuage,
 Her mild reproof restrain the hand of Rage
 Poor, old, and widow'd, tenant of a cot,
 Scorn'd by the great, and by the gay forgot,
 Her's is the noble life—the glorious end—
 Above the storms of Time—and *God* her friend!"

"There's no place like Home," if it is only consecrated to God.

"A charm from the skies seems to hallow us there,
 Which, seek through the world, you'll not meet with elsewhere."

Travel in search of beauty, or variety, or pleasure, east, west,
 north and south; go to Arabia, and see the waving palm tree
 spreading its feathery leaves beneath the scorching sun; go to
 Greenland, where the firmament spangles the unclouded sky,
 and where the moon sleeps "in full-orbed radiance" on the crys-
 tal iceberg; go to Italy, with its vineyards ripening and gushing
 under the ever-mellowing sunshine; go to the Alpine glen,
 where glaciers gleam and avalanches thunder; go to the moun-
 tain torrent, or the dimpling lake; see all the loveliness of this
 lovely world; still your thoughts will sometimes wander to a
 distant shore; perhaps to a distant grave-yard, where a wife and
 child are sleeping; perhaps to a distant garret, whence that wife
 and child took wing to heaven, and you will say,

"There is *one* land, of every land the pride,
 Beloved of Heaven o'er all the world beside;
 There is *one* spot of earth supremely blest,
 A dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest.

Say, would'st thou ask, where shall that spot be found?
 Art thou a man—a patriot—look around;
 Still shalt thou find, where'er thy footsteps roam,
 That land thy country, and that spot thy *home*!"

And it nestles in the love of wife and child—that best of temperance pledges—the love of wife and child, which will not let you play the truant from your own fireside.

I have urged upon husbands a spirit of tenderness towards their wives—let me conclude this plain address by pressing upon fathers a spirit of love for their children. It is not impossible that there may be some one here who sometimes spends that time and money in the tap-room which he knows he ought to spend at home. My friend, have you a daughter, upon whose face you smiled when she hung upon her mother's breast? A daughter who is rising into life, and putting forth charms which can enslave the heart of man. Guard that daughter as you would guard your life, cherish her honour more dearly than your own heart's blood. Woman is beautiful (I speak *feelingly*, as a young man)—but if the jewel, virtue, be taken from the casket, it matters not how rarely chaste the casket in itself may be. Think of how a tippler's example must operate on that daughter's mind. She grew up in innocence; she loved her father and her mother with a grateful love; but she sees the father sometimes come home drunk, and strike the mother whom she loves. She used to keep the cottage neat and clean, and anticipate her father's comforts; but the tie is broken, his coarse and sullen thanklessness disgusts her, and in rebellious anger she quits the home she once adorned, to escape the presence of a cruel parent. She goes forth into this giddy world, with all its snares and dangers, unprotected. The glance of lustful admiration, and the bold or the insidious word of flattery, are aimed at her, and the web of ruin is twisted round her feet, and like a foundering vessel, or a setting sun, she sinks beneath the waves. Now, whose fault is it, yours, or her own? At whose hands will God require her blood, at the great trying day? How could you expect obedience and respect after you had not only ceased to be a father, but become a mere beast in your daughter's eyes. When men are drunk, they turn dreams into realities, and realities into dreams. If there is a drinking father here, it is not such a wild improbability to suppose that some sad day he may have some dream like this—as he comes reeling home from his sottish revels—a dream in which he shall behold his daughter rushing wildly through the streets—her hair dishevelled, and despair blazing with hellish lustre from her eyes; a dream

in which a thousand weird and dreadful voices shall urge him in his staggering horror to follow in her track; a dream which shows him his child still speeding onward to some dreadful bourne, and which still drags him onward in drunken but alarmed pursuit—a dream where he shall see her pause an instant on the dark stone bridge, and then descend the steps to the water's brink—yes—to the river! to the deep rolling river—swift and dim—where the winter night sat brooding like the last dark thoughts of many who had sought a refuge there before her. To the river—where scattered lights upon the banks gleamed sullen, red, and dull, as torches that were burning there, to show the way to death. To the river—where no abode of living people cast its shadow on the deep, impenetrable, melancholy shade. To the river! To that portal of eternity, her desperate footsteps tend with the swiftness of its rapid current running to the sea. The drunken father tries to clutch her by the dress as she goes down to the dark margin, but the wild distemper, and the fierce despair, which has left all human check or hold behind, sweeps by him like the wind. He staggers after her. She halts an instant on the brink—then with a dismal cry she takes the dreadful plunge—he stretches out his quivering hand to hold her back, but he is too drunk to help her, and her dying glance as her glassy eyeballs glare upon him as she sinks before his face shall haunt him to the grave, and torture him in hell!

O! my friend, wherever you may be, or whatever may be your lot, light up your home with sobriety and love, and prayer; your board may be scanty, and there may be little food to eat, but bless God for every crumb, as a blessing you have not deserved. Trust Him who fed the five thousand with two fishes and four loaves, to care for your temporal good. I don't mean to say that bread, and cheese, and bacon will be tumbled down from heaven in answer to your prayers, or that God will rain down Bass's bitter ale in imperial pints, as a return for your petitions; but I *do* say that He will not leave the man who freely trusts Him to perish for the lack of food. Light up your home with prayer, and no poverty shall ever make it desolate. However much privation you may suffer here, remember this world is not our lasting home, and that there is a home preparing for us where we shall all be equals, for we shall be kings and priests to God. Sooner or later we must all of us flit from our present abodes; the monarch must leave the throne, and the beggar must leave the cottage; the preacher must leave his parsonage, and the workman and employer must quit the factory.

Our common landlord, at whose pleasure we all hold possession, will soon give us notice to quit, and pack us off bag and baggage. We need not take our furniture with us, for if we have confidence in Christ we shall find that He has prepared a place for us. Trust Him, then, my brethren, for He died for you. Trust Him, for He lives and pleads for you now; and if your wife and all your children die before you—if you have accepted Christ's salvation, and thereby made your earthly home a house of prayer—you shall, as you lie at last upon your own death-bed, feel as if even *then* you were but going *home*. And while from heaven's gate you hear the voices of the Spirit and the bride—while from angel-harps you hear a thousand chords of welcome—while from Christ's own lips you hear the benison of love and commendation, from amongst the voices of the fair troop of shining ones who are waiting for the loosing of the silver cord, one well-known accent shall salute your listening ear—deaf though it be to every earthly sound—and with your eyes glowing in death with lustre from the Ineffable, whose radiance floods your struggling spirit, you shall behold the countenance of that dear wife who gladdened with her presence your cottage upon earth; and as she points her finger to the starry seats above, where your children are seated near the King of Kings, pillowed on His shining robe, and bosomed on His beating heart, her lips shall once more warble in your ears, as life and immortality are brought to light—"Come *Home* to thy childer an' me."

Cross-Roads;

A LECTURE

BY THE REV. A. MURSELL,

IN THE

FREE TRADE HALL, DECEMBER 20TH, 1857.

THERE'S a right way and a wrong way of doing everything ; or rather, perhaps, we ought to say, there's *one* right way and a thousand wrong ways of doing most things. And there's one right way, and generally scores of wrong ways of arriving at every place. There are some people who seem destined always to get lost, whenever they wander half a mile from their own doors. For instance, you seldom hear of an old lady from the country inquiring the way from London Bridge to Charing Cross, but—directly she has been told to turn to the left, and go straight down King William Street till she gets to Cheapside, and then inquire again—she is certain to turn immediately to the *right*, and wander about at the back of Monument Yard, until at last she finds herself in the arms of a Billingsgate fish-wife, or shrinking under the bold gaze of a corpulent beef-eater on Tower Hill. Or, to take an illustration nearer home, it is not an unusual sight to see a young gentleman from the south, with fair hair and green spectacles, and with a sweetheart at Old Trafford, standing amongst the omnibuses at the Exchange, and—having been civilly directed by the “bobby” (No. 17 of the A division), to get into a Stretford Road conveyance—to see him in his love-lorn delirium, leaping headlong into one of Mr. Greenwood's Pendleton leviathans, and dreaming, as he rumbles over the pavement of Deansgate—under the firm impression that he is in Mosley Street—of the blue eyes and ruby lips of her he trusts ere long to be clasping to his heart—until he is pleasingly relieved from his reverie, and recalled to a consciousness of the stern realities of life, by being set down at Peel Park gates.

This is only a proof of the truth of the old adage, that "the course of true love never did run smooth." And, certainly, if there is one road more beset with difficulties than another—a road in which unexpected barriers are perpetually springing up and hindering our progress—in which molehills are everlastingly swelling themselves into mountains; in short if there is one, among the ordinary roads of life, which may more emphatically than another be called a CROSS-ROAD, it is that path which we pursue when we try to follow out the purer, and better, and fonder affections of our hearts.

Now, in the few plain remarks we have to make this afternoon, we intend to take ~~this~~ expression, CROSS-ROADS, under three different meanings.

First, then, we shall take it as applying to the crosses and disappointments which are likely to beset us in our journey through life.

No man, whatever his position, however rich or however poor, ever got through life without troubles and crosses of some sort or another. What a chapter of sorrows might an old friend of fourscore years read to us from his own history! From the first infant pain, when he cut his teeth, and had his gums lanced, to the last evil grin of sorrow, when trouble showed that *he* had cut *his* teeth long, long ago, by opening his grisly jaws, and biting a fresh furrow in the old man's brow. How could a hale old grandsire rehearse the sorrows of his life, as his little grand-daughter climbed upon his knee to light his pipe for him, and then fixed her earnest eyes upon his face to hear his story! How would he recal the time when he made his head ache with crying when the cat killed his pet canary, or when his father would insist on having *all* the kittens drowned, and not even sparing little tabby that he loved so much! How would he tell of times when he was birched at school for robbing farmer Giles's henroost, and then saying it was not him, but it was Jerry Smithers, of the lodge, and Tim Bobbin, the butcher's boy! How would he call the tears into his little grand-child's eyes by telling of the day he lost his own dear mother—and how she told him to be a good boy, and try to follow her to heaven! How would he clasp the little maiden closer to his heart, and pause to breathe a silent prayer to God to keep her feet from falling, while he told her of the strange and sore temptations of his youth—how sin and folly twined their web about his feet, and often banished from his thoughts his mother's dying counsels. How would he look with pride into her speaking eyes, as he thought of the admiring glances they would meet, and the sighs

which they would draw from many a love-sick breast—as he called to mind the time when he was married at the old church on the hill! How would the fair young face grow radiant with intenser interest, as the old man told her of the days when her mother was a little girl like her, and how she played, and laughed, and sang, as *she* did now! How would the tears spring forth afresh upon the flushed and glowing cheek, as he told her how he had laid both wife and daughter in the silent grave—and how they both prayed to God to take care of the little orphan whom they left behind! And as he closed the simple history—as he looked again upon that fragile flower—as he thought upon the hidden eloquence of its budding charms—as he felt the warm tears and tender kisses on his wrinkled brow—as he placed his trembling hand upon her head and stirred the rich luxuriant tresses of her clustering hair, in the earnest love of his caress—as he thought upon his own white silver locks and ebbing tide of life—and he the only earthly guardian of her lovely innocence and youth—and as he once more looked back through all the tangled web and CROSS-ROADS of his life, now verging to its close—how would the old man's veteran heart gush forth in prayer to God, that His own right hand should hold the little maiden up—that His shield of love and power should guard her feet, and that the crosses of her future life should lead her to the cross of Christ, her Saviour!

But there are common, homely, every-day troubles that come home to working-men, which it becomes us now to try and look at for a moment. And if I do not always hit upon a case in point, I am sure you will excuse me, and attribute it not to the want of *will*, but to the want of *knowledge*.

I should imagine, then, that there are times when work is slack, and you have little or nothing to do, and are almost in despair about how you are to feed yourselves and families. It will require a man of more experience and sagacity than myself to suggest any practical plan of relieving yourselves, or of obtaining relief in so dire an extremity. The only advice which I can offer to you is, to be frugal and economical during times of comparative prosperity—to be a little more sparing of the money which you may feel disposed to suffer to flow into the coffers of mine host at the tavern; so that you may have some little fund to fall back upon when a rainy day comes on, with which to provide bread and butter for the family whom you have left at home. I have sometimes thought, too, that employers might do something towards the creation of some such provisional fund, so that the workman might not be altogether destitute in

times of depression. But, as I said before, I have neither knowledge nor experience enough to talk about these things ; all I can presume to attempt to do, is to suggest to you the spirit and temper in which you should submit to these crosses and troubles. Remember, "in the first place," then (as they say in the pulpits), remember that the thing has to be borne, and it may as well be borne cheerfully as complainingly. "What can't be cured, must be endured," as the *poet* says. The effect of trouble is to create ill-temper ; and this ill-temper is often vented upon those who don't deserve it. A man feels, and very naturally, when he returns hungry and penniless to his home, that he has something to complain of. He grows sullen and desperate—the sight of his wife and children, pale and tearful, does not improve his humour ; and he first begins to sulk and swear ; and then, at last he—not strikes his wife, surely—yes, strikes his wife ! What ! strike that poor young creature yonder with the baby on her bosom, and with such mild loving eyes, bending over it as it sleeps ! O, yes, certainly—strikes her—and kicks her—and curses her—and drags her up and down the place, until she faints away ; and just gives her a parting kick with his heavy boot to ease his excited mind, and compose and soften down his feelings. And pray what for ? What for ? O, I don't know. Because she is as hungry as himself—because she has been trying to beg some bread for her child, from door to door—because she wanted to sympathise with him, and to comfort him with hopes of better times. I suppose this was the reason ; but bless your life, it's done every day, and it's a poor tale, surely, if a man can't thrash his own wife, in his own house, without being asked what for ! O, my friend, never suffer Satan to put such an edge upon the sharp tooth of poverty as to goad you to such a damnable act as striking a woman ! There's no cross-road of life along which her sympathy and love will not be found a comfort and a stay ; and though you sit upon your hearth-stone and watch your children die before your eyes, like a fair nosegay of sweet flowers withering before the blast, it will at least be a drop of satisfaction in the bitter cup, to feel that no want ever broke the tie of husband and of wife, but that the very embrace of death grew tighter from the expiring ecstasy with which you twined your stiffening arm around that form, which at God's holy altar you had sworn to love and cherish. O, if there is a beast more blackened by the fumes of hell than another, it is a wife-beater. I care not who he is. I care not what it is impels him to the act—even pity herself would breathe no sigh for him, though he lay howling in the outer darkness.

Then, there are domestic crosses, family troubles, upon which I can scarcely presume to speculate. You can easily imagine thousands of these for yourselves. It does not require, perhaps, that many of you should have to *imagine* them; you can recal many you have already experienced, and look forward to many others that await you. Every heart knows its own bitterness; and without trying to specify any of the varied forms which that bitterness assumes, O, let me just assure you as a fact that you may believe, and which you *WILL* believe some day, though you may reject it now, that the best armour in which you can meet these troubles is the armour of true religion. There is no sorrow through which you have passed, or have *yet* to pass, which Christ has not endured before you, and in which He cannot sympathise with you and help you; and whether, in answer to your prayers and supplications, He sees fit to send you down some temporal deliverance, be assured of this at least, that if you will but trust Him fully, freely, and entirely—if you will but believe in His love for you, and exercise a like love to Him, your earthly troubles, however terrible—the storms of life, however fierce, will, if you only endure steadfast to the end, land you amidst scenes of peace and joy, from which you shall look back upon the direst calamities as but the gales and breezes which wafted you to your Heavenly Father's presence.

But we have to look at Cross-roads in the common-stage-coach macadamized sense of the term. Everybody who has driven a team of horses, a drove of pigs, a flock of sheep, a coach and six, or a donkey-cart and one, knows the difference between a cross-road and a turnpike. He knows that a turnpike leads from one town to another—that it is almost always very dusty—that there are milestones standing at intervals along it—that there are inns with swinging sign-boards before them, and great horse-troughs, and sometimes a pretty barmaid. He knows that a cross-road leads nowhere in particular—that there are finger-posts with the names of little hamlets painted up upon them; but that their principal use appears to be to keep the traveller from walking into the ditch, or cooling his feet in a horsepond—that the ruts are sometimes about two feet deep—and that it would be certain death to any gouty or rheumatic subject to venture to drive or ride over the uneven ground. But still, with all these drawbacks, there are advantages to be gained by travelling along cross-roads. Picture to yourselves two men meeting together, no matter where—under a hedge in a turnip-field, if you like—or if you want to see them more comfortably quartered, imagine them sitting beside the village tap-room fire,

with a frothing tankard of home-brewed between them, and the fragrance of "the weed" creeping and gathering through the room. They are recalling the incidents of two long journeys which they once took. The short, thin man, with the ragged coat and melancholy face, first tells how he set off along the turnpike road with his little light cart, with a couple of sovereigns in his pocket. He has not driven far before he has to change his first sovereign to pay a toll-gate. A few miles further on his horse wants water, and he himself feels as though he should be none the worse for some water, too, and a little something in it. So, when man and beast have been refreshed, he asks the landlord "what's to pay?" Two shillings. Down goes the money, and off goes the man. He calls at half a dozen of these places during the day; for though he quenches his thirst for a short time, he always becomes more thirsty and more heated when he gets away. His first sovereign is almost gone; still he must spend the night somewhere, and this public-house seems just the right sort of place. He wants to get off betimes the next morning, so he will just have one glass and go to bed. There are seven or eight men round the fire in the bar, and amongst them the clerk and sexton of the parish, who boasts that he can drink any man under the table within twenty miles round. The sharp eyes of the company have caught a glimpse of our friend's purse, as he pulled it out to pay the ostler for the horse's feed of corn, and they are determined to chaff him into standing "glasses round." "Call me at five o'clock to-morrow, Mary," cries the traveller, as the girl trips up the stairs to bed. "Now, gentlemen," says the pious sexton, whose bottle-nose and watery eyes show him to be quite as much in his element in the tap-room as in the reading-desk or in the vestry, "Now, gentlemen, we seem all very jolly here to-night, and if the landlord will stir the fire, I don't mind singing a song." Of course there is great applause at the prospect of the song. "But," continues the conversational sexton, "as we begin to see the bottoms of our glasses, I propose we have a bowl of punch; the gentleman that came in last shall pay for it, the landlord shall mix it, and I'll help to drink it; now that's what I call a fair division of labour." Well, our friend is not proof against these blandishments; he sends for the punch; he applauds the sexton's song; and in less than an hour he finds himself singing another, a feat he never before attempted to perform since his mother thrashed him with the jack-towel from behind the wash-house door. Soon after this he detects himself in the friendly act of shaking hands with the company all round, and giving

them a general invitation to come and spend a week with him at his farm-house in Lincolnshire. He then breaks two or three glasses, and knocks the punch-bowl off the table in trying to dance a country reel, like a tipsy jack-in-the-green; and feeling constrained by high moral principle to impart a little sound and solid advice to the party before retiring, he rises to his feet, after almost upsetting the table in the attempt, and delivers a powerful address upon the social wrongs of humanity, concluding by singing, in a very thick and husky voice, the chorus of the Ratcatcher's Daughter, after which he falls fast asleep with his head among the fire-irons. They haul him off to bed like a sack, and fling him down upon it as he is. The maid comes battering the door at five o'clock, but she might as well be knocking at the tomb of "all the Capulets" for any answer she can get, except a snoring grunt, which almost makes her fancy she has made a mistake, and been rapping at the door of the pig-stye. Six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve o'clock go bye, and find him still snoring on. At last he opens his leaden eyes, and looks about him; presses his trembling hand to his throbbing temples, and sprinkles a little cold water on his aching head, and gropes his way down stairs. The laughing handmaid, whom he told to call him up at five o'clock, slyly wishes him "good afternoon." The crafty landlord, after asking him whether he will take breakfast or dinner, hands him his bill. He reads items about broken glass, bowls of punch, and all the rest of it, and fancies that he is in a dream. The bill swallows up nearly all his second sovereign, and he yet has forty miles to travel. Well, he must make the best of it. He goes out to get his horse and cart, and as he looks at a team of noble horses standing at the water-trough outside, and then thinks of his own pale, sodden, and unshaven face, he wonders almost which is man and which is beast. But his woes are not yet ended; for when he comes into the stable, he discovers that some friend has eased him of his horse and cart; and the landlord tells him that "a young man, as called at five o'clock in the morning, said as how he'd been told to drive it on to the next town, ten miles further up the road." There's nothing for it but to walk, so off he sets. When he has crawled over the ten dusty miles of road to the place where he expected to find his horse and cart, he discovers that it is all a hoax, and that no one has seen anything of it. His stock of money is all gone, and he has to beg his way along the road for the last thirty miles; and at length arrives at his journey's end, in no very good humour with turnpike roads, the poorer by a horse and cart and two sovereigns, and the richer in nothing but bitter recollections and humiliating thoughts.

The little, fat, good-tempered fellow, the other side the fire, has sat and listened very attentively to his companion's story, and as soon as it was finished he exclaims, "Well, *I*, too, once took a good long journey, but though it was in many parts rough and tiresome, I did not fare quite so hardly as you seem to have done. The fact is, I always had a dislike to turnpike roads; and having only ten shillings in my pocket, I made up my mind to stick to the cross-roads. So I turned my donkey round by the finger-post, and went jolting along the lanes in the deep ruts. It was not many houses that I passed, and those I saw were small and poor. The first night I took a turnip from a field for my supper, and slept under a haystack, sheltered from the wind and weather. It was not such a pleasant chamber that I felt inclined to lie long in the morning, so I was up with the lark, and jogging along the road again by five o'clock. I soon grew hungry, and so, leaving Balaam to graze a little by the road side, I knocked at a cottage door and asked for a draught of milk and a slice of bread. It was a pretty, ruddy, healthy-looking girl who asked me to come in, and when I entered I saw no one there but a very old man, and a very lazy-looking cat. The one was dozing in his chair, the other purring on the hearth. When I had taken a huge basin of bread and milk, which seemed to me the sweeter for the happy smile with which my pretty entertainer set it down before me, and after she had feasted me besides with bacon and new-laid eggs, I rose to take my leave, and said, 'Well now, my dear, what must I pay for all this kindness and provision?' For the first time a reproachful cloud passed over the fair girl's face, as she replied, 'O nothing, sir; you are kindly welcome to anything we have.' 'Nay, but I must leave something, to show at least I'm not unmindful of your kindness.' So, as she would not let me pay with money, I paid her with a kiss, and I felt decidedly the better for it. I could have breakfasted right well upon that kiss alone; and though the old man in the chimney corner woke up and stared just as I was giving it, I would not have missed the twinkle of that maiden's winsome eyes, nor the mantling blush of innocence that mounted to her cheek, for the most savoury rasher of bacon that ever bubbled on a gridiron. And so, to make a long story short, so it was wherever I halted on the road. It seemed to me as if some rich gentleman had travelled on before me, and paid the people to look after me and to take care of me. For, go where I would, there was always a hearty welcome, a cheerful smile, open-handed and open-hearted hospitality, and nothing to pay. And when I got to my journey's end, there were my ten

shillings as safe and sound as when I started. My very donkey looked especially good-tempered as we drew up at the door when we got home, and woke up the echoes with a loud 'hee-haw,' before he poked his head into the manger and began to eat his hay."

Now, I don't know, friends, whether you have seen my object in taking up your time with such a childish story. But I have thought, as I have been contrasting the experience of these two wayfarers, that something like a parallel to it might be found in our different pilgrimages through life.

There is the broad smooth turnpike road of pleasure and of sin, and there is the narrow rugged cross-road of duty and of truth. In travelling along the first, the payments that we have to make are heavy, and we pay dearly for the comforts we enjoy. Those comforts, like the draughts the tired traveller took by the way, only satisfy our craving for a time, and leave us thirsting the more ardently after deeper and more powerful potations.

Follow the man who travels on the broad road of sin, and you see him sinking deeper and deeper into evil habits—you see the meshes of the tempter twisted tighter and closer round about him—you see the flame of passion mounting higher and higher in his heart, while Satan and his angels sit like infernal blacksmiths, fanning the furnace of his lusts with the bellows of temptation and deceit—you see him lose, one after another, the amiable and attractive graces which once belonged to him—you see him becoming, as he thinks himself more free, more and more a slave; for while he is severing from about him all the tender ties and chords that bound him to the ways of virtue and religion, the devil is silently forging a chain, and twining its ponderous links around him—a chain which shall fetter his spirit down for evermore "in adamant bars, and penal fire." He seems to be a debtor to every one. Along his whole journey there seems to be one motto, pay, pay, pay. Go where he will, he comes across some little watch-box over which is written, "pay here." It is like a constant introduction to a theatre, where nothing is to be seen, and where there is no half-price. He tries the gallery—they make him *pay*, but he can see nothing; he goes to the boxes and *pays* there, but it is no go; and then he goes down into *the pit*, and pays there, and when he gets there, there is no escape. He has had the world to pay, the flesh to pay, and now he has the devil to pay. He has been leading a reckless life—has been flirting and coquetting with every petty

allurement—he has taken up the yoke of Satan—has cast in his lot, and gone into partnership with sin, and at last he begins to look for the wages of his apprenticeship, and the per centage of his share in the business; and as he sinks despairing into the opening gulph of ruin, he finds the truth of what he once laughed at and despised, “The wages of sin is *death*.”

But follow, on the other hand, the man who plods along the rugged cross-road. It is certainly a very toilsome path; but he carries with him a light heart and a contented mind. He drags no heavy chain along his track; but he bears the light and easy yoke of Christ. He stops for some refreshment by the way; and when he feels for gold or silver, he finds that Christ has paid the bill before him. Cross-roads! Yes, those are the true cross-roads that lead us to the cross of Christ; and though the journey may commence with a thorny path—with a Slough of Despond—or even with a Valley of the Shadow of Death; though from behind many a lurking tower and infernal rampart the fiery arrows may be levelled at our breast—though Apollyon may be striding up and down to seek to overthrow us in the Valley of Humiliation—though the lions may gnash their bloody teeth at the gate of the Palace Beautiful—and though Giant Despair may for a time turn the key of Doubting Castle dungeon upon us—still our feet shall be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, and enable us to tread down the roughness of the path—the right hand of heavenly succour shall withdraw us from the Slough of Despond—the still small voice of comfort from on high shall cheer us through the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death, and drown the taunts of all the fiends and demons which glare out of the darkness—the shield and breast-plate of Omnipotence shall turn back every dart—and the sword of the Spirit shall shiver Apollyon’s gleaming lance—the chain of the eternal purpose of the Lord shall hold back the lions—and we shall see the fair and shining virgins in the jasper halls—the spear of valiant Great Heart shall dispatch the Giant Despair, and the key of promise shall unlock the door, and set us free to wander to the Delectable Mountains and the Enchanted Ground; and at length, as we feel the breezes of the better land fanning our foreheads and stirring our hair—when we almost fancy we can feel the crown of light already encircling our brow—we shall press onward to the prize of our high calling; and while God himself is wiping all tears from our eyes—while Gabriel’s harp is tuned to herald our admission—while the wife and child, now radiant with the ineffable glory, come near to

give us our first lesson in the anthem of the skies—while angel
and archangel join to swell the welcome,

“Come in, come in,
Eternal glory thou shalt win”—

and while we magnify the love which has aided us to fight so
good a fight—to wage such noble warfare, and to win so bright
a crown—we shall learn how well worth while it is, in seeking
such a conquest, to resist the allurements of Satan’s turnpike, and
brave the perils of the cross-roads.

Let me just remind you that now is the time for making up
the mind which road we will follow. I entreat those who have
not decided to follow Christ to do so now

BEHOLD, behold the Lamb of God—On the Cross!
For us he shed his precious blood—On the Cross;
Oh, hear his all-important cry,
“Eli, Lama, Sabacthani!”
Draw near and see your Saviour die—On the Cross.

Behold his arms extended wide—On the Cross!
Behold his bleeding hands and side—On the Cross.
The sun withholds his rays of light,
The heavens are clothed in shades of night,
While Jesus doth with devils fight—On the Cross.

Come, sinners, see him lifted up—On the Cross!
He drinks for you the bitter cup—On the Cross;
The rocks do rend, the mountains quake,
While Jesus doth atonement make,
While Jesus suffers for our sake—On the Cross.

And now the mighty deed is done—On the Cross;
The battle’s fought, the victory’s won—On the Cross;
To heaven he turn’d his languid eyes,
’Tis finish’d now, the Conqueror cries,
Then bows his sacred head and dies—On the Cross.

Where’er I go I’ll tell the story—Of the Cross;
In nothing else my soul shall glory—Save the Cross;
Yea, this my constant theme shall be,
Through time, and in eternity,
That Jesus tasted death for me—On the Cross.

If there is any poor sinner here who has wandered far along
the broad and dusty road, I would call to him, as though God did
beseech him by me, to turn back and come to Christ while yet he
may—while yet His pierced hands are stretched out to welcome
him. None are too vile to come—none too deeply stained with sin

—His grace is sufficient for all. If you are poor, come to Him who, though He was rich, for your sake became poor. If you are homeless, make a refuge and a home of the bosom of Him who, while the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, had not where to lay His head. O, if I could but persuade only one to take up the cross of Christ, how happy I should be! For I should then feel that something had been done by the blessing of God upon these simple words, not only towards rescuing an immortal soul from death, but to the bringing about of that glorious time when the murky clouds of iniquity shall give way before the rising of that bright Sun of Righteousness, on whose broad face shall be written in letters as vivid as lightning, and as with a pen of fire—Here is at length the Jubilee of the World—here are the triumphs of the Son of God!

What Ails Thee?

A LECTURE

BY THE REV. A. MURSELL,

IN THE

FREE TRADE HALL, DECEMBER 27TH, 1857.

THERE are some people who are always fancying that they have something very grievous the matter with them—who never can be reasoned out of the belief that they must assuredly die in the course of next week—who are never at peace unless a doctor is feeling their pulse—and who are always requesting every one who comes near them to look at their tongues, although they have not the slightest desire to be gratified with a sight of it. If you tell such people as these that they are looking much better than when you saw them last, they will feel quite insulted. They will exclaim, with a sort of sinking languor, “Better, sir! I never was worse in all my life, although I have been a great sufferer for the last fifty-seven years. I never felt so ill as I do at this moment. The flush upon my face, which you mistake for the bloom of health, is nothing but the hectic glow of a consuming fever; and the lustre of the eye, which may look to you at first sight like reviving spirits, is only the last struggling upleaping of the flame ere it goes spark out for ever.”

There is nothing more easy than thus to delude ourselves that we are the hapless victims of some incurable malady, and to worry ourselves and other people with the incessant story of our ills.

Go some autumn or winter season to Buxton or Bath, to Cheltenham, Leamington, or Harrogate, or any other of these delectable resorts, where would-be invalids are always bathing in dirty water, and drinking unheard of quantities of liquid which once upon a time might have been water, but which a certain coterie of learned physicians have, by their chemical experiments and sage practical operations, long ago changed into a cesspool of magnesia and chalk; something, both in composition and colour, like London milk. Go, I say, to one of these chosen retreats for gouty old half-pay officers, and dropsical dowagers

of the ginger beer persuasion, and there you will have an opportunity of beholding some of the *fashionable* ailments of humanity. Early in the morning you will meet young ladies of sixty-two, and old boys of eighty-four, flirting, and ogling one another out of Bath chairs, in the Pump-room, where they drink enough of the before-mentioned dirty water to float a seventy-four gun-ship. About the middle of the day you will see the "old boys" through the window of the Athenæum glaring at the columns of the *Times*, to see if any more imbecile old women have been added to the pension-list, or received commissions in *the army*. The paper shakes in the old boy's quivering hand, as though his doctor had ordered him to imbibe something more than he got at the Pump-room; for, being an old soldier, of course he would not act without orders. And at this time of the day, you will see the mincing young girls of sixty-two reclining in their wheeled chairs, pretending to read Tennyson and to admire nature, but in reality darting spiteful glances at each other, and venting the ill-temper—which the paint upon their cheeks, and the cosmetique upon their eyebrows, and the false teeth, the false curls, and the false smile, cannot quite conceal—upon poor little "buttons," who propels the load of vanity from behind its locomotive throne, like first childhood trundling second childhood to the churchyard in a wheelbarrow. Again, in the evening you will meet all this bewitching society congregated together in the Assembly Rooms, where the gouty old boys and the charming occupants of the Bath chairs, are sitting at little round tables, playing whist and ecarté; while the more juvenile portion of the party, those varying from forty-nine to seventy-two, are ambling and whisking about the room, under the firm impression that they are dancing a quadrille.

If you ask these people what ails them, they will tell you a most appalling story. The rickety old carpet-knights who wear regimentals, and who regularly receive their half-pay at the expense of an ungrateful country, but who never saw a battle-field except in a picture, and never beheld a fight except upon the stage, and never went further than Paris and the Rhine from their native shores—these valiant veterans will tell you some such tale as this:—"Ah, sir, if you had seen as much of the wear and tear of camp-life, as I have—if you had spent seven years amongst the wilds of India, as I have—if you had sat all night watching for the attack of the barbarians, by the light of the camp-fire, as I have—if you had led on a regiment of soldiers to the charge, through prairie and morass, through brake and bog, as I have—if you had been knocked about in all weathers,

and in all climates, as I have—you would not be surprised at my being a little in want of rest and doctoring.” Now, if the old hypocrite spoke the truth, he would say:—“If you had led a lazy, good-for-nothing life, as I have—if you had spent the best part of your existence in guzzling and boozing, as I have—if you had been a pampered and licentious rake, as I have—if you had gone to bed beastly drunk three times a week, for five-and-thirty years, as I have—you would not be astonished that my hand should sometimes shake a little now, or that my nose should be a little purple at the tip, or in short that I should be verging towards my last legs.” But on the matter of their ailments people seldom are thoroughly straightforward and honest. Even the faded spinsters who jog in and out of the pump-room in their wheel chairs, as though they never could contain themselves except when they were troubling the waters or the waters were troubling them—even they will ascribe their fancied indisposition to the most romantic and poetical causes conceivable. They will tell you that their souls are too large for their bodies, whereas no one in his senses would ever suspect them of having any souls at all. If you look incredulous, they will refer you to the medical man, Dr. Lollypop, in support of their assertion. Dr. Lollypop is a tall, slim gentleman, who carries a black cane when he walks, and drives a black mare in a black gig when he rides, and wears a black coat, a black wig, and prescribes black draughts, whether he rides or walks. Let us accompany him on one of his professional visits to the stout old lady in the green turban, whom we met at the pump-room in the morning. The worthy lady is just undergoing the process of having her cheeks painted with a most juvenile bloom, out of a small paint-pot which contains “the dew of her youth,” when she hears the doctor’s gig drive up to the door. She hurriedly dismisses the maid with the hare’s foot and the paint, and snatches up a handsomely bound copy of Longfellow’s “Hyperion,” and gently and gracefully reclining upon the sofa, she turns the book wrong way upwards in her confusion, and waits in a studious agitation the doctor’s introduction. At length the door flies open, and the maid, who has just locked up the paint-pot, cries out, “Dr. Lollypop, your ladyship!” (Enter Lollypop with his most approved professional smile, and his head respectfully bent forward.) “Ah, doctor,” says the languishing beauty, “is it you? I scarcely expected to see you to-day; you have taken me quite by surprise.” (Of course the old hag has been expecting him the last two hours.) “You know what a little thing upsets me.” “Has your ladyship been to the pump-room to-day?” asks

Lollypop, with another bland smile. "O, dear, yes! and drunk my usual seventeen tumblers of the delicious water." "Good; it appears to have imparted quite a glow to your ladyship's countenance." "Ah, I fear that is the excitement occasioned by reading this delightful book. I have read 150 pages this very morning," &c., &c., &c. So they go on. The doctor knows how to play his cards, and so he compliments the lady upon a roseate tint upon her cheek which was not there two days ago—for a very good reason, because the perfumer had not got any rouge or red paint, and the bloom could not be put on—he discerns a gloss about the hair which he says is a sure sign of returning health, and is the effect of the seventeen tumblers of dirty water every morning—well knowing that the fair creature is as bald as a Dutch cheese, and that the luxuriant ringlets belong to her newly-imported wig from London. These are a few of the ways in which people will coquet with death; these are just specimens of the barriers they will build to screen themselves for a little from the sound of his step, and the sight of his leering grin. But if stern truth were to answer the question—"What ails thee?" what would be its reply? Would it talk about a shattered nervous system, debility, depression, excitement, and all that nonsense, and conclude by prescribing tumblers of water and Bath chairs? No; it would say, you are dying, and will ere long be in your grave. You may try to cheat yourself, but you cannot cheat death, even with a daub of paint and a wig. You may have the nose of your own dead body painted blue if you like, but death *will* have you, paint and all. And if you want a prescription from me, I say, get ready for what *must* come. Prepare to meet thy God. If you want a beauty-spot to deck you out for death, seek for the beauty of holiness, which can deck you out for immortality. If you want water, seek for the water of life which the Great Physician has prescribed, and after which you shall never thirst again. If you want a chair, seek for a chariot of fire which shall carry you to heaven, and a throne on which shall shine the brightness of the smile of God. If you want a doctor, go to Him who can dispense the healing balm of Gilead. If you want prescriptions, go to the Bible, and take the promises of the Lord of Hosts to bear you up in the Dark Valley of the Shadow of Death.

But poor people have their ailments as well as the rich. It isn't quite so easy for them, either, to shut out the face of the destroyer. Go to the poor man's home; see a whole family "cabined, cribbed, confined," within one narrow room. The air is hot and close, and smells as if it never came from

neaven. Look at the sallow visage of the man, the pale and sunken cheek of the woman, the pinched and famished faces of the children; and as you ask of each, "What ails thee?" see consumption, fever, famine, written with death's own fingers upon each upturned forehead, and gleaming from each hollow eye. No mincing foolery about large souls, excitement, &c., can keep away the answer to the question as to the causes of these diseases. Close factories, where the web of death is woven around many a maiden's form, as she plies the engine to weave the silks and satins of our fine ladies; unwholesome trades, in which the ulcer-spot of consumption is eating out the life, while the hands are busy in making up the cakes of rouge to daub sham-Abram blushes on some vixen's jaw; close garrets, and grim cellars, where heaven's air comes sighing in at second hand, like an unredeemed pledge from some celestial pawnshop—where the snail-track glistens on the wall, and rats and mice disport among the rotten rafters; *these* are the stern answers to the question as to how it is the eye has lost its lustre, the lip is parched and pallid, and the cheek throbs hot and burning—these are the Bath chairs in which the poor are carted to the graveyard—these are the Doctor Lollypops who preside over their funeral honours. O, would to God some of these grand folks, whose souls are so much bigger than their bodies, could feel a little more for those whose bodies are too hungry and too weak to hold their souls; and would help to find for them, at least, clean homes and wholesome food! We often hear philanthropists, in the pulpit, on the bench, and in all manner of high places, talk of other people's *duty to society*. The alderman, when he sends the ragged thief to prison, or consigns the pick-pocket to the treadmill, says that he does it as *a duty to society*. Vice is bewailed, and crime is punished as a solemn duty to society. Is there no duty resting on the shoulders of the rich and of the wise, to devise and carry out some scheme to stay the ravages and sins they punish, by finding some *temporal* comforts to soften and to sweeten the poor man's lot? O, late-remembered, much-forgotten, mouthing, braggart duty, always owed, and seldom paid in any other coin than punishment and wrath, when will mankind begin to know thee! When will men acknowledge thee in thy neglected cradle and thy stunted youth, and not begin their recognition in thy sinful manhood, and thy desolate old age! O! ermined judge, whose duty to society is, now, to doom the ragged criminal to punishment and death, hadst thou never, Man, a duty to society to discharge in barring up the hundred open gates that wooed him to the felon's dock,

and throwing but ajar the portals to a decent life! O! priest and parson, whose duty to society it is to mourn in melancholy phrase the sad degeneracy of these bad times, in which thy lot of honours has been cast, did nothing go before thy elevation to the lofty seat from which thou dealest out thy sermons to other tarriers for dead men's shoes, whose duty to society has not begun! O! magistrate, so rare a country gentleman and brave a squire, had you no duty to society before the stacks were blazing and the mob were mad; or did it leap up, armed and booted, from the earth, a corps of yeomanry full-grown!

But while it is a duty, which has been sadly neglected by the rich, to inquire into the temporal wants of the poor, and to use their power, and influence, and wealth, to make their earthly lot less hard and galling, it is a still more bounden duty, which has been no less neglected by the men who profess to mourn for their spiritual degradation, and long for the extension of God's truth among them, to inquire into the ailments of their souls, and carry to them in their own way that heavenly comfort which can support them under every ill, and help them over every trial. There is such a hideous dignity assumed now-a-days by the heralds of Christ's Gospel, that a poor man scarcely dare go near a church. I wonder whether Peter, and Paul, and John were as stiff, and cold, and formal as many of our preachers now. It seems to me, when I look upon these stately saints, as if religion had been freezing and stiffening ever since the free invitation first came welling hot and loving from the heart of Jesus, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." One might almost fancy that Christianity had caught cold, and could do nothing but sneeze out a couple of frigid homilies on a Sunday, and then go home with a sore throat for a week. My fellow-sinner, let me tell you, in all the earnestness of a full heart, that none but Christ can do you good. If my throat is sore, it shall be with crying to every sin-stained conscience here, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!"

What ails thee? Is it poverty? I would I had the wealth of Cræsus, to fill your home with comforts! but though I am obliged to say, "silver and gold have I none," I can offer you something better than either. I can point you to the cross of Him who for your sake became poor. Poverty! Why, the Son of God had not where to lay His head! so he can sympathise with you there. But if you have Christ, you must not talk of poverty, for a single drop of His blood is more precious than all the treasures of the world. What ails thee? You are sick and

ill, and your children are dying, and your wife is grieving? Hear me tell you a story. There was once a general and universal plague; it seized upon every human being upon earth; it clutched at the new-born infant in the cradle, and set its deadly mark upon its baby-brow; it coiled its folds around the necks of full-grown men, and dragged them like a millstone to the gates of death. As day succeeded day, ten thousand souls were strangled by the plague, and millions more lived on despairing. At length, some learned men looked up into the sky, and saw a star shining in gentle lustre from the azure blue, and they followed after it until it settled over a stable in a place called Bethlehem; and there, pillowed upon the bosom of a virgin mother, lay an infant, with the radiance of the heaven of heavens quivering about its head. That infant grew into a man, and that man went about the earth to drive away this plague. A lame man crawls to His side, and at His bidding he rises up and leaps for joy. A leper comes before Him, and at His touch the livid spot subsides, and the flush of healthy manhood springs into the cheek. A blind man gropes his way into His presence, and the scales of darkness drop from off his eyes, and he looks upon the light of heaven. The deaf and dumb begin to hear and speak, and devils tear the flesh of those in whom they nestled, and fly before the mandate of the man Christ Jesus. He walks upon the swelling waters of the sea. He calls the dead back again to life, and He feeds the hungry multitude, until they all are satisfied. Grave, stiff, and starched professors, not unlike some men whom we meet in Manchester, come to talk with Him, and He calls them "a generation of vipers." A poor, despised publican cries out from his full soul, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" and his prayer is heard, and answered with a crown of glory. And now these strait-laced Pharisees, jealous of the growing power of this man, cry out, "Let Him be crucified!" and they take Him to a mountain and nail Him to a cross, with a thief on His right hand, and a thief on His left. A yelling crowd surround His cross, and rend the air with demon laughter. They spit upon Him—they crown His brow with thorns—they pierce His side with a spear—and, just before He dies, one of the thieves turns round and gasps, "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," and the answer comes like a celestial echo pealing on his ear, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." And as the curtain drops upon the mighty tragedy, a prayer is put up, my dying fellow-sinner, for you and for me—"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Now, this is the sacrifice Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has

offered for you and for me. This is the way in which He wrought a cure for the great plague, and saved millions of souls from deep damnation. He has gone to heaven now, having risen from the dead, and is pleading for the vilest sinner in this room this moment, before His Father's throne. He asks only one thing from you, and that is, that you will leave off your sins, and only just look to Him. A single look of trusting confidence upon His cross will be enough to save your soul from hell. Think of your sins, then, and think that they are the nails which fastened Him to the cross. Every fresh oath you take—every fresh act of guilt you do—tears open afresh His wounds. God, in His righteous justice has often lifted up the arm of vengeance, and grasped the sword of wrath, but Jesus has put up His hand to stay the stroke, and shown once more the print of the nails.

What ails thee? A guilty conscience? Look to Christ! What ails thee? A hard and stony heart? Look to Christ! What ails thee? A starved and hungry soul? Look to Christ! Time is passing fleetly on its swift wing. Men are dying round about you; dying in their sins, and going to spend eternity in hell. O, what will be the troubles, the poverty, the hunger, which you have endured on earth, compared with the terrible remorse with which you will howl from amongst the shadows of the outer darkness, "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved," if you go on to despise the Saviour's death, and trample under foot His blood! O, my brother, it is not too late to turn back, believe me! However double-dyed a wretch you may have been, you have yet a chance to change the flames of hell for the glories of heaven. To every hardened and infatuated drunkard, swearer, wife-beater, liar, thief—to every sinner against the God of love—to every resister and despiser of the open arms of Jesus, I would cry with all the earnestness of one who would fain pluck some brand from the eternal furnace, "Madman! turn back, and look upon Him whom you have pierced, and mourn! Down upon your knees before the throne of mercy; put up the prayer which has power with God—the deep-drawn sigh of a broken and a contrite heart. Do it without delay—*Now*, while it is the accepted time—*Now*, while it is the day of salvation. And, as the answers of peace come clustering about you from on high, you shall hear the rejoicings of the angels of God over another sinner that repenteth."

This is the last Sabbath of another year. There is a pensive eloquence in the flight of time, if we would but listen to it. Eloquent in its appeals to *all*, it makes them felt at times more tellingly by *some*. O, could we lift the falling veil of this

expiring year, and show the history of its course in the experience of each, what a strangely chequered scene it would disclose! How many different mirrors would the retrospect uplift before us! We, many of us, entered on this year with firm resolves, and possibly with earnest prayers. How many of those resolutions have been broken! Some may have started out upon the closing season unattended and alone, who now see fire-side and table graced by the gentle presence of a loving wife. The echoes of the dying year will doubtless be associated in the minds of some with the first lusty cry of infancy ringing through the cottage walls. Some tender ties have doubtless been cemented, and vows of love been plighted during the summer and the autumn evenings of 1857. May those vows never be discarded, but may the "sere and yellow leaves" of 1858 bestrew the path of man and wife whom this year shone upon as lovers. To many here a glance into the past will soon recall the memory of a thousand happy hours, made happy by a thousand different causes. To some, misfortunes and reverses will be brought to mind; and many have to count their losses rather than their gains. A sad and touching scene of death and pain may blight the backward view to some of us. In summing up the lights and shadows of the past, the shadow of death perhaps may interpose his sooty wing and overspread the prospect. The echo of some dying prayer—the memory of a farewell glance of love—the sigh of pain—or the clammy pressure of a stiffening hand; these may be among the dread remembrances of this retiring year. Some chair, which but a few months back was filled by a dear friend—a mother, sister, wife—may now be vacant, and stand beside the hearth a sad memento of the smiles, the movements, and the counsels of the loved and lost. Some fair young brow which but a year ago was wreathed in bridal garlands, may now wear widow's weeds. Some stone in yonder graveyard vault has haply been removed this year to give a place to some fresh sleeper to repose — perhaps to place a child upon its buried mother's bosom. The sexton has upturned full many a sod, and thrown up many a new green mound. The grass waves green upon the graves of some whose hands we grasped in health and friendship but a while ago. The epitaph is graven on the marble, and the urn is sculptured on the column, to mark the entrance of many tenants into the narrow house. O, yes! the scythe of the destroyer has been in the great harvest-field of man! The stalwart youth, the blooming maid, the hoary sage, and the decrepit sire, have been alike cut down—men, women, and children of all ages have "gone to their long home,

and the mourners have gone about the streets.' And what lesson have all these things brought to us? You and I, my friends, are a year older, and a year nearer to "that bourne from which no traveller returns." We are all of us so much nearer to eternity, with its revolutions of happiness or woe. O, if the earnestness of our appeals has proved ineffectual in bringing us to Christ, let the silent eloquence of the closing year remind us of our duty and our hopes! Let the past illuminate the future, and let us open our hearts and homes to Jesus, who is waiting to be gracious. Let not the opening year see the drunkard still hiccuping over his cups, or the scoffer still blaspheming the name of his Great Father. O, now is the time to make the temperance pledge—make it before God, not man—make it upon your bended knees before the mercy seat of grace—make it with the sighings of your heart, not merely with the stroke of your pen! Banish from your spirit every usurper of the place of the Heavenly Guest; and in the grey flickering twilight of this ebbing season, let this your prayer go forth to Him who ever sojourns near the earnest suppliant's heart:—

"Abide with me—Fast falls the eventide,
The darkness thickens, Lord with me abide;
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O, abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away,
Change and decay in all around I see,
O, Thou who changest not, abide with me!

Come not in terrors as the King of Kings,
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings,
Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea—
Come, Friend of Sinners, thus abide with me!

I need Thy presence every passing hour,
Nought but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness;
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee,
In life, in death, O, Lord abide with me!"

Woman:

A LECTURE

BY THE REV. A. MURSELL,

IN THE

FREE TRADE HALL, JANUARY 3RD, 1858.

AT the solicitation of numerous friends, I have adapted as a Lecture what was originally designed as a Sermon. When preached as a discourse, it was based upon the verses in John, "Then the disciples went away again to their own homes, but Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." The first five or ten minutes will doubtless savour too strongly of the pulpit and the pew, to please some of my friends before me, but if they will kindly try to keep awake, by pinching one another in the leg, or giving some nodding neighbour a friendly pull of the hair, I venture to hope that they will all become more or less interested as we get along with our subject.

There are frequent passages in the Word of God, suggestive in themselves, rather of private and domestic characteristics, than designed for the elucidation of any abstract principle or doctrine; passages more strongly illustrative of special peculiarities than of general principles.

In the historical and narrative portions of the Scriptures, characters of all shades of distinction, in a social, moral, and intellectual point of view, are introduced. We have the haughty king—the venerable seer—the inspired lawgiver—the subtle soothsayer—the astute politician—the needy mendicant—and the wealthy nobleman; we have the faithful servant—the rebellious subject—the valiant champion, and the faithless deserter—in short, we have the world as it is, and mankind as they are, mirrored truthfully before us.

In the personal biographies which are contained in the Bible, the most exquisite touches of nature are often to be found, and although it is not well, perhaps, to allow such subjects to form the staple matter of our thoughts in considering the Word of God, or to suffer them to lead our minds away from those portions which relate more directly to the attributes of God, or His will toward man—their consideration may, with great propriety, be introduced as an occasional episode in our researches in the

Scriptures of truth, as, by passing them by unnoticed, we run the risk of overlooking many touches of beauty and simplicity, from which (though they may not relate directly to any great cardinal doctrine or truth), many familiar lessons of profit and instruction may nevertheless be derived.

It is always interesting to trace the conduct of men during the progress of great and important events. Such an interest increases in proportion to the magnitude of the event, or the degree in which he who ponders it is personally concerned in it. The text relates to the most important event which ever transpired in the history of the world, and in which every one, who has ever borne the human likeness, has, whether he knows it or not, a deeper concern than in anything else which ever has, or ever can, occur. The grandest scene in the great drama of life had just closed; the curtain had just fallen on the sublimest transaction which ever disturbed the sleep of ages; but three days had passed since the veil of the temple had been rent in twain, the earth had quaked, and the expiring cry had ascended up to heaven, "It is finished;" and now the stillness which succeeds the storm had set in, and nature seemed to stand aghast with suspended breath, in a stupor of amazement and awe. The text calls us to review—in the conduct of those who had been most intimately connected with the great Redeemer through his life—at this momentous juncture, the impression which his decease had produced upon them.

We wish to call more particular attention to the conduct of Mary, in remaining about the sepulchre of Christ, and to derive a few general reflections from the consideration of the difference between her conduct and that of the disciples.

In thus lingering about the sepulchre of our Lord, Mary appears to have been indicating a trait of character, rather than obeying a passing impulse. She was consistent with all that she had done before, and was exhibiting the same spirit which had characterised her demeanour ever since the crucifixion of our Lord. We read, in the 19th chapter, that she and one other woman remained at the cross after most of the disciples had departed to a distance, so that she seemed, by her present conduct, only to be manifesting that tenderness of heart and power of emotion which appears to be her distinguishing characteristic.

The Evangelist Luke mentions a certain woman "which was a sinner," in the 7th chap. and 37th verse, who anointed our Lord's feet from an alabaster box of ointment, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Many commentators have done much wrong to the memory of Mary Magdalene, by identifying

her with the person there spoken of. There is no possible evidence to support such an assertion, but, on the contrary, much to contradict it. How Mary Magdalene came to be confounded with the person here mentioned it is difficult to say; but such is the case, and, accordingly, she is generally regarded as having been a woman of depraved character. The first place in which Mary Magdalene is mentioned, is in the 8th chap. of Luke, at the second verse, where it is recorded that "out of her had gone seven devils." Now, we find our Lord reproving the disciples for blaming the conduct of the woman who anointed His feet. It is not very probable, however, that he would have approved of, and defended the conduct of one who was the victim of demoniacal possession, and whose actions would be, therefore, under Satanic control. We read, moreover, that Mary Magdalene was among those "who ministered unto Christ of their substance." These facts are sufficient to prove that she had not been known as a person of bad character, and it is as unjust to say that she who had been so physically wretched as to be possessed of seven devils, was dissolute, as to affirm that an insane person is necessarily depraved.

There is every reason to believe, then, that Mary was attracted to the cross and to the sepulchre, by pure emotions of tenderness and love, and not by any superstitious wonder or idle curiosity. From the remark contained in the 9th verse, concerning the disciples being ignorant of the fact that Christ should rise again, we should be disposed to infer that Mary was equally ignorant of it. It is not likely that what had been concealed from, or at least, was not understood by the disciples, would have been more clearly or specially revealed to Mary. We are not warranted, therefore, in regarding this act of Mary's as a special or striking act of faith, but still it is by no means without its significance. Although we cannot venture to contemplate her as passing the solitary hours beside the tomb of her Lord, in anxious expectation of His promised rising (for her surprise at His subsequent appearance proves that she anticipated no such result), the simple act of waiting at the tomb shows a tenderness of heart and nature, which we cannot contemplate without admiration. The mysterious silence which reigned around, the early dews of unbroken morning, the dismal tomb, could not scare her away from the spot where she had seen them lay her Lord; and when the disciples had wandered back again to their homes, her lonely figure might yet be seen in the dawning twilight, and her disconsolate lament might yet be heard, "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

Although we must not infer from the retirement of the disciples from the tomb, as soon as they found that it was empty, that they were unconcerned and untouched by the circumstance, there is something so characteristic in the difference between their conduct and that of Mary—something so strongly illustrative of the tenderness of woman's nature, and so touchingly corroborative of our experience of her endurance and patient constancy, that, at the risk of incurring the charge of substituting sentimentality for spirituality, we cannot refrain from making this subject form the burden of our remaining remarks.

1. We remark, then, that this difference of conduct shows a sort of sullen desperation in the character of man, while it evinces a simple and confiding hopefulness in that of woman.

In the contemplation of creation generally, it is impossible not to remark how beautifully every requisite, which is needed to contribute to its perfectness, is supplied. In the various kingdoms of nature we find the properties of one substance conducing to evoke those of another; one body, perhaps hurtful and injurious in itself, rendered useful and beneficial by the union of its particular attributes with those of another; the hidden excellencies of this, made available by association with the secret properties of that, or the lurking and virulent poison of a third, neutralised and made wholesome by the leavening influence of a fourth. All the detached details of the vast economy of nature seem to be brought together, and united into one complete and harmonious whole, by a sort of golden thread of union, running through the system, and drawing together the tattered fabric into a perfect and entire garment, in which to clothe creation with becoming symmetry and grace. Nor is this wondrous completeness of design to be observed only in the mere architecture of inanimate nature; it assumes even a more striking aspect when applied to the regulation of human dispositions. Just as the musician strikes the various chords before he ranges them in order, so does the Great Artificer seem to try the sound of all the jarring passions of mankind, and to attune them into unison with the harmony of His vast designs, until what before was harsh and discordant jargon, becomes a tuneful and flowing symphony. When the Eternal first made the world, it was His gracious pleasure that all who inhabited it should live in unalloyed happiness; accordingly, when He had created Adam, we may well imagine Him to pause in the contemplation of His work in a sort of surprise, so to speak, at the restless and sullen air with which he wandered through the beauties of the garden, and mark, with a kind of misgiving, the settled gloom and the

distressful look which hung about him, despite the loveliness wherewith he was surrounded. The Almighty hesitated ere He pronounced as good this chiefest part of His six days' work. He saw that the undimmed effulgence of the bright sun, and the serene tranquillity of the unclouded sky, with which He had arched the heavens, could not dispel that deepening gloom from the brow of the only reasonable being He had yet created; and the idea seemed to occur to Him like a kind of afterthought, "it is not good for man to live alone," and that no smiling sun could clear his brow, no fragrant bowers could soothe his spirit, but that it was reserved for the hand of Woman to withdraw the darkening curtain, and that, without her, Eden was no paradise for man. It was not until the most delicate touch of all had been given to the whole, that all the essence of the power of the Deity had been concentrated and blossomed in the creation of Woman, that the Great Contriver could gaze with unmixed complacency upon His work, and pronounce it "very good." There is something very suggestive in the very mode of woman's creation, which seems to determine her character and her sphere. Nurtured in rest, cradled in repose, she shed that same repose upon the unquiet spirit of man; and now, through all his sorrows, all his cares and difficulties, in sickness and distress, she stands by, an ever-constant friend, an unremitting help-mate, and when all others have deserted in despair, the very tomb is wet with woman's tears, the sod worn with woman's footsteps; the gentle hand which smoothed the dying pillow, and cooled the fevered head, now leans like a drooping flower upon the green mound; the stifled sob mingles with the sighing breeze, and it is only when the tomb is vainly sought that the complaint is heard, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

2. The fact of *Mary* remaining *alone* at the sepulchre, induces us to remark that, while Man parades his sorrows in complaints and murmurings, Woman's are borne in secret.

The sphere in which man is called to move usually causes whatever calamities befall him to become the theme of general remark. Each man's sphere is more or less public, and hence the incidents of his life become, according to the extent of his influence, public property. The circle of woman's influence is essentially private and domestic, and thus her cares become, as it were, by their very nature, subsidiary to those of man; hence it is that men are apt to underrate the magnitude of mere domestic harassment and trouble; but the more a man knows of human nature, and the more deeply his heart warms towards

those around him, so far will he become convinced that the cares of regulating the little world of home, are as great and troublesome as those connected with the wider world of business, and thus will he be led to respect and love that gentle influence, without which there would be no such thing as home. The difficulties which a man encounters in the world are often participated in, and nearly always sympathised with, by others; household cares, on the other hand, have to be borne alone, and are unrelieved by the sympathy of reciprocal affection. But although the *nature* of the duties which fall within the range of female influence almost necessitates their being discharged without the sympathy of others, it appears as though, by some Providential arrangement, it were the disposition of woman to *desire* to endure her grief, to a great extent, in solitude. When heavy calamity befalls a man, the bustle of life, or the influence of change, and social excitement, will do much to efface its ravages from his mind. But it is otherwise with woman. The memory which only flickers dimly—now burning brightly—now almost extinct—in the breast of man, is an ever-living presence in *her* more loving heart. Leave man to himself, and he will banish regrets in active labour, or in festal mirth, but woman hides herself from others, and laments alone. Think, for a moment, of a soldier's home, when the summons comes to call him from those he loves into the bloody jaws of battle. A few farewells, and then amidst the busy hum of camps, and the din of arms, the parting moment is forgotten. The cry of the child is drowned in the clash of steel—the sob of the mother is stifled in the sound of musketry. But turn back to the home just deserted. Look at the gentle wife, who holds up her laughing child with trembling hands to see its father as he goes, and tries to see him, too, but cannot, for the streaming tears. News soon comes of victory, but it has been bought with blood. Turn to the battle-field; the sun has set upon it—the night dews fall upon the bloody grass—the distant gun echoes gloomily across the plain—the gasping steed lies champing with expiring grief—the rein clutched in the rigid hand of its dead rider—the midnight ravens chatter joyously, and plume their black pinions for a greedy feast—the spectral bat wheels around the lifeless forms, and flaps his shadowy wings as he soars away—the moping owl sits glooming by the living grave—the screeching vulture hovers in the air, and, swooping downwards from the portentous darkness, infixes its cruel talons into the glazing eyeballs of the stark and livid face, turned upwards to the sky—the howling night-wolf yells its hideous requiem to the dead. But, hark! what is it

makes the night-wolf hold its breath, and drives the vulture crooning to its eyrie? Was it the cry of some poor wretch in whom the vital spark yet lingers? Let us take help to him and raise him from his "gory bed." But, stay! What is that light which glimmers through the gloom, that figure gliding here and there among the dead? A Woman! See her as she falls upon her knees, and holds her flickering lamp to this and that cold face, to find the one she loves. See her bend downwards over yonder form, and wring her hands in agony, as she puts back the matted hair from off the mangled brow, and kisses the death sweat from the clay cold lips. See her in passionate prayer beside the soldier's corpse. Was it a husband—brother—father—friend? It matters not, she loved him as only woman loves. Shall we go to her? No! Let her weep on. Leave her to the pity of the Husband of the widow—the elder Brother—the Father of the fatherless—the Friend of the forlorn. She would be alone with Him. Her heart is broken, and He despiseth not the prayer of the broken heart. Oh, Woman! God-beloved in old Jerusalem! we need deal lightly with thy faults, if only for the agony thy nature will endure in bearing heavy evidence against us on the day of judgment!

3. The contemplation of Mary's conduct in lingering at the grave *alone*, suggests the reflection, that the spirit of devotion, as well as that of devotedness, is stronger and deeper in woman than in man.

There are few, if any, who have ever learned to pray, who did not learn it first from female lips. Several present may be able to recall the simple strain which a mother taught them to pour out before the Majesty on High. The first earthly shrine at which we kneel is generally a mother's knee, as though God had commissioned His fairest creatures to be our first conductors to His throne. It is a fact which the history of most of us will confirm, not only that we first imbibed a spirit of devotion under female guidance, but that our sentiments of veneration are generally most strong while yet under maternal influence. A youth who has been taught to reverence the Name, the Word, and the Attributes of the Most High, will find himself liable to relax in his devotion and veneration, on leaving for the first time the home where first he cherished them, to mingle with the trouble and cares of life. Hence the importance of often reverting, with a grateful recollection, to the solicitude of those who watched and guarded our childhood—of frequently recalling fondly the dear memories of home—of calling back the parting prayer the loving blessing, and the gentle warning with which

we were dismissed from home. My fellow-youth, who hast known through life a mother's love, be entreated by one to whom that knowledge ceased ere it was felt, to prize and cherish it. Never grow too proud to care for it. Never suffer yourself to think it manly to slight her injunctions, but let your affection for her grow with your strength, and blossom into truest obedience with your ripening age. Some may have lost a mother. Let us who are thus bereft, remember that she watches us from heaven, that she pauses, as it were, at intervals, in the eternal songs she sings before the throne, and trembles as she sees us treading our giddy way through the maze of life. O, let us not disturb her eternal repose, but cause her to rejoice with the angels of God over our repenting souls, and seek to wash our robes and make them white as her's in the blood of the Lamb!

“My Mother! when I knew that thou wast dead,
 Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
 Hovered thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
 Wretch even then—life's journey just begun!
 Perhaps thou gav'st me, though unfelt, a kiss:
 Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss.
 I heard the bell toll on thy burial day,
 I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
 And, turning from my nursery window, drew
 A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
 But was it such?—it was. Where thou art gone,
 Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
 May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
 The parting words shall pass my lips no more!”

The presence of this depth of devotion, however, in the nature of woman, should lead men to be forbearing in their thoughts, and considerate in their behaviour respecting her. How often is it that we are apt to smile at, as weakness, the tear that starts unbidden to the eye, when we cannot discern the cause which called it forth. But that heart, whose deep and tender feelings we are too stern and brutish to understand, is the shrine wherein the pure and holy flame of love is fanned by the Deity itself—where all that dignifies and sublimates our nature, is refined and mellowed into an emanation spiritual and heavenly, as the divinely-kindled light which hung over the ark of God within the holiest of all—where the breath of devotion rises like incense, and distils into the dews of resignation and of prayer—where the very footprints of sin itself are filled up and half effaced, by the ever-flowing tide of truth and love. Despise not then, O, man, the sigh which swells the breast, or the tear

which dims the eye—they come from a pure source, a sacred fountain! It is the spirit of love that has troubled the waters. It may be some passing sound recalls a once familiar voice, some transient look of sorrow calls up a glance of pain with which a spirit passed away, and brings back the pressure of the hand of some dead child about the neck, and shows the treasure of the tomb in living likeness once again. That sigh may be a breath from yonder church-yard, where the green grass waves over a little grave: that tear may be the unfolding shower of a passing cloud that recalls the memory, while it hides the spirit of the young immortal from the view. Let us not profane, then, the gentle emotion whose depth we cannot understand, but rather emulate the truth which called it forth, and love the tender shrine which hallows it.

4. We remark, lastly, that, though it was through woman that sin first came into the world, she is found clinging most closely to the refuge.

Throughout the whole of the history of our blessed Lord on earth, we find Him surrounded most faithfully by women. The most striking instances of faith in His power, which the Scriptures contain, were exemplified by women, and their constancy and reliance called forth the almost wondering approbation of our Lord himself. The intimate connection and the friendly intercourse which subsisted between our Lord and the sisters of Lazarus, while it shows the condescension of Christ, beautifully illustrates the character of woman. The tender attentions which were paid Him by women, here and there, form touching and suggestive episodes in the sacred page. Although the woman first listened to the serpent, it was the SEED OF the woman who bruised the serpent's head. Her tender hands cherished the infant Jesus in the manger, as His unfolding Deity first blossomed into human likeness—her yearning bosom cherished the Babe of Bethlehem, and nursed the glory round the brow of His omnipotent weakness; through all His thorny course she followed Him—she hung upon His lips as He stood upon the mount and changed the law of Sinai to a law of love—she called His blessing down upon the children's heads, and placed them smiling in His gentle arms—she traced His footsteps through the crowded streets, and touched His garments with a lively faith—she tended Him when weary with His works of love—and thought no spice too costly to anoint His feet—she asked Him for the water after which she should never thirst again, and told her kinsmen that He was the Christ—she wept without the gate when He was betrayed, and trembled at His trial when He was condemned—

she followed Him to Calvary's fatal top, and clung around the cross on which He died—she left Him not even in His death, as she had followed Him through life, and even at His empty tomb she lingers ever lovingly and constant, still pining for the presence of her God. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." And her lips were the first to proclaim His resurrection to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God.

There may be some who are disposed to say this is not the Gospel. It, confessedly, does not point directly to the cross, but it may teach us to be tender-hearted, and to forbear towards, and love one another; and these few familiar sentences will have done at least more good than harm, and will not have disgraced this holy day on which they have been uttered, if they help to soften and warm one hard and cold heart to dispel one angry thought, to heal one quarrel, to draw closer the members of one family, or to make us think more kindly of each other. It was not a lesson too small for the great Apostle of the Gentiles to inculcate, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

But there is another and a higher lesson to be derived from the subject we have treated. We have been confining our attention chiefly to the inculcation of mere earthly graces, but the text carries with it the old but ever new story of the cross. The example of woman has been held up as an object of respect, as well as imitation. Man once followed that example, and through it, overwhelmed the world in sin. Let him follow it again, and bear that sin to the cross of Christ. He followed her to the tree of Eden—let him follow her also to the tree of Calvary—he tasted with her the poisonous juice of the fruit, let him taste also with her the balm of Gilead—he took of the leaves which laid bare the wound of sin, let him take, too, the leaves of the tree which are for the healing of the nations. Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. Be not content till you have found the cross, and joined the groups who throng around it. Be careful for nothing so that you win Christ, and if you have anything to complain of, let your only lamentation be, until you find deliverance, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

Red, White, and Blue:

A LECTURE

BY THE REV. A. MURSELL,

IN THE

FREE TRADE HALL, JANUARY 10TH, 1858.

LEARNED divines, of the good old school, used to be very particular about dividing their sermons properly, so that "firstly, secondly, and thirdly" might fall into their appropriate places. A sermon without three divisions, and about thirty subdivisions under each of them, would be regarded as a flagrant outrage upon the human understanding, and a violation of all laws, human and divine; and the man who ventured to preach it would be branded as an apostate or a heretic without the smallest scruple. I can imagine the delight with which one of these venerable-looking old fellows, whose portraits form the frontispiece of magazines—who are always represented as wearing no collar, and with a capacious double chin—would have seized upon such a subject as that which is to engage us this afternoon. Ready divided into three distinct heads—"firstly, my brethren, we shall consider the red; *secondly*, the white; and *thirdly*, the blue;" and then the old boy would have racked his brains for all the red things in the world, from the setting sun down to pickled cabbage; and all the white things, from the snow clad mountain to a clean night-shirt; and all the blue things, from the slumbering ocean to his own nose in frosty weather.

Now, as I cannot make any pretensions to being anything like a sage, and as there is not a particle of what is venerable in my composition, of course it would be gross presumption to attempt to imitate such an illustrious example as the one I have mentioned in the discussion of this title. Still I cannot refrain

from so far forgetting myself as to analyse these three colours, and to trace their individual development, separately, whenever it suits my purpose in this address to do so. All three may occasionally be seen in the human countenance, under different circumstances. For example—if a gentleman gets into a crowded omnibus, and crushes a lady's petticoat in sitting down, she will turn very *red*. If this self-same lady, in taking a ramble through the fields, finds herself chased by a raging bull, she will turn very *white*; and, if she takes a sail across the channel, in squally weather, to the Isle of Man, she will probably turn very *blue*. Put a person in a rage, and he grows red; frighten him out of his wits, and he grows white; ask him to subscribe to a charity, and he grows blue. The human nose, apart from any other feature, will exhibit all these various tints. After dinner, and port wine and brandy-and-water, it looks red; flatten it against a pane of glass, and it will become white; leave it exposed to the wind at Christinas, and it turns blue. Babies at six weeks old exemplify all these colours. When they are tucked up in the cradle at night they are red; when they have just subsided from a fit of crying they are white; and when they have choked themselves by imbibing sustenance too greedily they grow blue. A schoolboy may probably have observed these three hues all merging, rainbow-like, into one another on his own flesh, after being caned at school. I know *I* have often. Just where the end of the cane came swinging round the fleshy part of your arm, or any other equally unprotected part, there will be seen a beautiful streak of red; where the thick end came in contact with your ribs, there will be a delicate tinge of blue; and these will merge into the natural white of the skin, as though Sir Joshua Reynolds himself had mixed the colours. A cruel man's wife, or a drunkard's daughter, could doubtless exhibit a specimen of this interesting tri-colour. Upon her bosom, gashed by the knife, or torn by the ruffian's claws, the red stain mingles with the marble white, like the blood of a dead warrior gurgling on the snowy plain; and on her tearful and appealing brow there is the blue scar all livid and throbbing, where, in his pleasant playfulness, her lord and master has dashed his gentle fist, or thrown a quart pot which he was too tipsy to carry to his lips. Put a country lad, a poor seamstress, and a half-pay officer altogether, and there you have the red, white, and blue represented by human nature. The flush of the pure breezes on the rustic's cheeks makes them as red as a new chimney pot; the close work-room and the late hours have bleached the poor girl's face white enough; and

high feeding, hard drinking, and doing nothing, have made the gallant officer as blue as an apoplectic lobster. These national tints might be represented by parcelling out the human race in threes. For example: you have only to imagine a soldier, a bridesmaid, and a policeman in company, and you have the red, white, and blue at once; or a beadle, a clergyman, and a charity boy, and you have them again. Or a judge, a lawyer, and an alderman, and there they are again. Only let fancy ring her changes with reference to these colours on the human race, and you will find the bells almost imperceptibly chiming out

“Three cheers for the Red, White, and Blue!”

I need not take you into the fields to look for them elustering among the wild flowers—I need not bid you look along the tangled hedgerows for the red geranium, the white meadow-sweet, or the blue forget-me-not. I need not ask you to stand with me by the margin of the clear stream, and see the red dog-rose by its bank, the white water-lily on its surface, or the blue hare-bell peeping into its tide, and winking like a maiden’s eye in its glancing current. I need not clamber with you up the mountain-side to pluck the red heather, to admire the white pimpernel and lotus, or to scent the hyacinth and violet. I need not give you a leg over Lord Bumkin’s garden wall, to see the red carnation and the peony, and the japonica, the white cyringa, privet, and the lily, or the blue convolvulus, pansy, and heliotrope. I need not get you into a scrape by bidding you plunder his lordship’s orchard, to find the red apple, the white melon, or the blue grape: we all know we shall find our chosen colours in the fruits and flowers, and that the juices of the one and the fragrance of the other tell of the red, white, and blue.

Neither is it needful to go into the lands where birds of every plumage, and of various song, show all these colours forth. We know that we shall find feathered representatives of each and all, and that from the Arabian palm tree, and from the banyan tree of India, from the gnarled branches of our own guardian oak, from the thick tracery of the Norwegian pine, and from every bower and wood, and vocal copse and forest, a thousand little warbling voices blend to sound the praises of the red, white, and blue.

Then, what do we want with the red, white, and blue on a Sunday afternoon? There can be nothing profitable and serious made out of that; and it is a very unbecoming and undignified thing for any one who professes to be a minister of the Gospel to talk about it. Be it so. Macbeth said, “throw physic to

the dogs," and so say I about dignity. The dogs who prate so much about it are quite welcome to keep it for me; and if they find it still conducive to their dignity to bark and snap at you and me, I am sure I have no objection, if you have not. It is a consolation to know that when they try to yelp down these humble efforts to bring a lesson of humanity and a Gospel message home to a hard heart, it is not the Master of the House who sets them on.

But what have humanity and the Gospel to do with the red white, and blue? They do not seem very intimately connected, I must confess—but let us see if we can't squeeze a little Gospel out of them—and, as we find it first in order, we will begin with the Red. I read somewhere in my Bible these words, spoken by the Lord himself through His prophet: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow—and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Now, here we have the red and white—all ready to our hand. But I am sorry to say that our first duty is to try to convince men that they *are* sinners—to make them believe that their hearts are clothed in scarlet stains—and red like crimson through iniquity. I can imagine any man here this afternoon, on my telling him that his heart is foul and reeking with evil and with sin, turning round upon me and saying, "It's a lie! I am no worse than my neighbours—and am better than thousands round about me." That may be, but that's not the question. I don't ask you whether you are better or worse than another man; the question is, are you or are you not a sinner before God? "Well, and if I am, I dare say you yourself are not quite free from all these sins you rail against, if the truth were known. Look at home, and take the beam out of your own eye, my fine fellow, and don't lay all the sin at my door, while you have a festering heap of it piled up before your own." If any one is disposed to retort in language such as this upon me, I can only say, God knows that I have sin enough at my own door, and God forbid that I should come here to set myself up as any better than my neighbour—and I declare to you, and before my God, that I do not address a single word of warning or of caution to you, that I do not also address to myself. In natural desires and evil tendencies, I put myself upon a level with the most debased and wretched criminal in the darkest gaol in England—and I know if I have been kept from doing deeds of cruelty, and committing gross outrages on the laws of God and man, it is no credit to me—but all owing to the restraining grace of God. I know I am a sinner like yourselves; and I speak to you as a *fellow-sinner*—as a dying man to dying

men. I know I have a mighty heap of sins piled up at my own door; and it is because I cannot cart them away—because I have not strength to lay the heap level—because I need some mightier power than my own, and because I humbly hope I have in some degree found it—that I ask you to apply to the same aid, and seek the same assistance, even that of a crucified Redeemer. Now, there are lots of men here, I daresay, who can swear a good round oath; who can tell a good big lie; and who think they have said rather a smart and clever thing when they have damned the eyes of some pot companion, or mixed up the sacred name of God with some obscene or brutal joke. Now, I want to get such men to believe, now—what I know they will believe one day when it may be too late—that every oath they take, every lie they utter, every cruel blow they strike, every drunken brawl they join, is a flaming brand with which the quenchless fires of hell are kindled, and with which he is lighting for himself a fiercer furnace than if he locked himself within his own dwelling, and set it in a blaze around him, and let his blackened ashes smoulder in its ruins. In short, I want to show to each man here his own heart as it is; and in doing so I desire also to look at my own as it is. Now, if you do not like to have your own heart held up to public view, I will hold up my own as a sample of the rest. In the first place, I find myself in health and strength; I find myself provided with food and raiment; I find myself living in a Christian land, free, if I please, to read my Bible, which points out to me my duty, and free to hear the Gospel preached if I choose to go. Now, I ask myself, who gives me my health and strength, who gave me my life, who preserves that life, who placed me in a Christian country? who, in short, gives me all I have, and makes me all I am? It is God, and God only. What, then, has God a right to expect from me? That I should give Him the love and service of my heart, that I should learn and do His will, and that I should gladly own Him as my Lord and Father. Well! have I done this? Do the first affections of this heart of mine, whose pulses He sustains, and whose breath He inspires, leap upward to Him as to their natural centre, and their proper fountain-head? No! I am much fonder of the things of this world; I am too proud to acknowledge these blessings as coming from God, and my heart is full of enmity against Him. I am not too proud to take God's blessings, but too proud to thank Him for them; and I employ the life He gives me, and whose noblest powers He has a right to claim from me, in the service of the devil, and in sinning against

God. I go further still. When God calls to me, I will not listen. When the hand that has given me every good thing, and which might now hurl the thunderbolts of vengeance, and let loose the lightnings of wrath upon me, is stretched out in mercy, and is beckoning me back, I thrust it aside, and I still run madly to the paths of death. Justice grows impatient, and clamours for my blood. God still is pitiful, but justice must be satisfied. At length a volunteer presents himself to satisfy the claims of justice, and bids Him let His sword descend on Him and not upon me; He comes to earth; He meets the devil who has tempted me, and dyed my heart so red, and then He dies; is nailed by yelling crowds upon a cross, and as He gives up the ghost, He cries, "Father forgive him, for he knows not what he does." He puts up this prayer for me, and yet I go on sinning, still I am found at the public house, still drinking, cursing, swearing, never in the house of God, never on my knees at prayer, never lifting up my voice in a hymn of praise. I have a refuge to go to, but I laugh at it; I have a fountain to come to, but I trample underfoot the blood, and put my Saviour to an open shame. Now, my fellow-sinner, is not all this true of you? You can't deny it. Well, then, you must confess that your sins are as scarlet, and that your heart is red like crimson. Well, suppose it acknowledged, what is to be done? Why, we have a red heart; and on the one side of it a furnace of red flame, and on the other a fountain of red blood. The world, the flesh, and the devil, are trying heart and hand to pitchfork it into the fire; the Lord Himself is pointing to the open fountain, and exclaiming, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Now, if these words, addressed by God's prophet in His name, to those who had spurned His mercy and forgotten His love in *prospective* view of the Redeemer's sacrifice, 800 years before it had been offered, would apply to every sinner's case *then*, so, surely, will the same words, taken up by His ministers in His name, and addressed to those who have lapsed from His ways, in *retrospective* view of that same sacrifice 1800 years *after* it had been presented, will apply to every sinner's case *now*.

Suffer me to ask those who are conscious of having ungratefully sinned against God, who are sometimes brought almost to the gates of despair, in thinking of their own transgressions, to take it as a truth that these words *are* adapted by God Himself to them *now*; and that just as the promise was given in reliance upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, so *shall* that promise be fulfilled

in the case of every penitent who will accept it in dependence upon the same propitiation.

It is well that we should be ashamed of sin ; it is well that we should deeply humble ourselves because of it. But it is not well that we should be ashamed to seek pardon for it at the ever-open source of mercy.

It may be that there is some conscience here burdened under a sense of sin and of unworthiness, haunted perhaps by the shame attendant upon some one act of evil which overshadows all the life, and casts its burden over all the spirit. When you go among your companions or your friends, you feel disposed to shun their glance and to avoid their fellowship ; when you come and take your place among God's people in His house you feel like Judas at the supper—an interloper ; and if the Master of Assemblies were to exclaim in reference to this congregation, “One of you is a devil,” your remorseful conscience would acknowledge, “Lord, it is I.” When in the social circle, you dread to mingle with its pleasure, as if you feared your fellow-man could read your heart ; when in solitude, you tremble at any intercourse with yourself, and shudder at the companionship of your own evil heart and your own accusing conscience. You feel almost disposed to call already on the rocks and mountains to fall upon you, and hide you from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Should this, or anything like it, be the condition of any mind present now, we would be the last to try to shake in any degree your sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. This is the state of mind in which a sinner *ought* to be ; but it is not the state of mind in which he ought to *remain*. My friend, if the vision of your own guilt *will* haunt you like a phantom, and disturb your rest and harass all your thoughts, do not distrust the mercy of your Heavenly Father ; fly to His Holy Word for counsel—read David's deep lament under his great sin : “Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to thy loving kindness : according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” Read his light-hearted thanksgiving when he felt his prayer was answered : “Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found : surely, in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding-place ; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble ; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of

deliverance." And with these words, dropping and distilling like some heavenly dew upon your burdened spirit, fall upon your knees before the footstool of the heavenly grace; plead, in simple earnest accents, the blood of sprinkling; bring nothing but a broken and a contrite heart before the footstool of your Father; call up the memories of all His tender mercies; look straight to the cross, and all the Sinaitic thunders that have rent your spirit and disturbed your soul, shall be hushed in the whisper—"it is finished." The darkness which has brooded on your conscience shall roll back before the light that gleams from Calvary, and you shall find that your sins though as scarlet shall become as wool, and though red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow.

But there may be some here who are disposed to say, "all this is very easy after only a first or a second transgression, but I have sinned again and again, and broken resolutions solemnly repeated, time after time, how shall I dare approach again the God from whom I have so often receded?" It is, indeed, a solemn and an awful thing to find ourselves trifling and playing with the mercy and the love of God. It becomes us well to see to it that our penitence be sincere ere we again seek pardon at His hands. But, my fellow-sinner, remember it is your only resource, you have no where else that you can go, and if you do not go, there is nothing before you but a fearful looking-for of judgment. Would you actually reconcile yourself to dwell with everlasting burnings? Do you intend to make up your mind to inherit the blackness of darkness for ever? What! with all the precious invitations of the Spirit and the bride *still* ringing in your ears; with a long-suffering Saviour *still* stretching out His nail-pierced hands before you; with a fountain of mercy *still* standing open for uncleanness; with your attention *still* arrested by the "turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die," of a compassionate and sympathising God; will you, with such a tide of mercy *still* flowing in loving surges round about you, turn your back upon a Father's beneficence and a Saviour's tears; or hesitate to grasp the hand which will yet again rescue you from woe? "How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him—until seven times? I say not unto thee until seven times, but until *seventy times seven*." O, don't measure the love and the mercy of God by that of man! But, however often you have gone astray, ask, as you have asked before, and you shall receive; seek as you have sought before, and you shall find, knock as you have knocked before, and the door shall be opened unto you.

There is one little word in this verse to which it becomes us to give strong and urgent emphasis. That word is "now." "Come *now* and let us reason together saith the Lord." He does not care to stop to enumerate all your transgressions; He does not wait to ask Himself whether He has mercy enough to pardon *all* sin; He takes that for granted; He only asks you to *come*, and all He insists upon is that you should come *now*. "But," says the sinner, "it was but yesterday I perpetrated a dark and wicked deed; I sowed to the flesh what I ought to have sowed to the spirit; I sacrificed to Satan what I ought to have sacrificed to God; must I come now?" Aye, *now*, with the weight of your transgression full upon you; *now*, with the demon eyes of remorse leering on your conscience, and the grinning and derisive laugh of the hyæna spectre gloating on your guilt; *now* with the envenomed talons of despair tearing at the vitals of your spirit; *now*, with the fell remembrance chasing and hunting you here and there, and showing you the dismal darkness of a near damnation. "Come, *now*, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

O, my fellow-sinner, be assured of it, "the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." Let us reason together. Is it wise to reject for the sake of a passing indulgence, or for fear of a passing humiliation, such overtures as these: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." I can imagine some one saying, you have often quoted these things before, can't you find something new to say? No. I can find nothing new, that is so much worth saying as this. Half our

sermons ought to be filled up with these invitations. What language can be plainer? what meaning have they, if they do not mean what they say? If these are not free invitations they are cruel taunts; if they will not apply to *all*, they will apply to *none*. Take them then, freely as they are offered, for the sake of Him who bought the inheritance to which they summons you. Let the criminal of deepest dye take them, for they are meant for *him*; let the thief, the outcast, the beggar on the dunghill take them, for they are meant for *them*. And if any self-righteous Pharisee shall say to them "these are not for you," let them cry, "Liar, stand off, and bring not thy recreant shadow between me and my Saviour!"

"Who has surveyed the sacred roll,
And found *my* name not written there?"

It may be true that your sins cry out for vengeance—it may be true that you have sinned against God with a high hand and a stretched-out arm—it may be true that you have wandered from the green pastures of His fold; but it is truer still, it is a more faithful saying, and more worthy of all acceptance that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and if you only trust Him, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; and though red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

I have left myself no time to point you to the blue sky which shall be your heritage, if you will but come to this fountain. Your heart is red with sin; make it white in the blood of Christ, and in the white robes which He has washed for you you shall enter the bright and holy city beyond that bright blue sky above your head. If we should meet each other some day before the throne of God, all of us made kings and priests before Him, all clothed with holiness, and freed from sin, all rich, with no more poverty and no more pain, whatever severe critics may think of these rough, uncouth remarks, it will not be all in vain that we have talked together in this room to-day about Red, White, and Blue.

Silence in Court !

A L E C T U R E

BY THE REV. A. MURSELL,

IN THE

FREE TRADE HALL, JANUARY 17TH, 1858

THE exclamation which forms our subject is generally uttered from the indignant lips of policemen, to the refractory mob in the gallery of Mr. Maude's court. When people are particularly excited, however, they will make a noise, so the injunction has often to be enforced by a tap on the head, or a poke in the ribs, from No. 47 B, who stands sentinel in front of the gallery, in order to enforce decorum.

There is a sort of mysterious poesy about silence, whether in a court, in a cathedral, or anywhere else, that seems to be inseparable from a white stick with a gilt top. I have no doubt that if there is any one present now, who has had the curiosity to go and watch the proceedings in our city police court, they will have noticed that the gentleman appointed to keep order in front of the gallery already referred to, carries a long stick, that was once white, and, I have no doubt, had once a gilt end, but which has been poked into so many greasy waistcoats, and rubbed upon so many bristly heads, that all the gilt has been rubbed off, and the white has long ago been done brown. Go into a cathedral at service time, and the beadle is sure to be strutting about the aisles with one of these white-and-gilt sticks. I remember, when I was a very little boy, going into Westminster Abbey, during the chaunting of the prayers, and, being rather more mischievous than devotional, I amused myself by sticking a pin into my elder brother's leg, who was sitting next me. He endured the infliction till flesh and blood could stand it no longer, and then sung out so lustily, that the beadle, who thought it was me, came rushing up, and having first of all

given me a desperate rap on the head to bring me to myself, he seized me by the collar of my coat and brought me to *himself*. As I resisted all the while, he was compelled to carry me by "a leg and a wing," as poulterers say, that is, to seize me by one leg and one arm, and carry me out to the door. As he was carrying me in this fashion out of the chancel, and through the far-famed poet's corner, I pinched him viciously in the calf of his great fat leg, which was enveloped in a large white stocking. This caused him to drop me to the ground with a crash. He put me on my feet, and took hold of my shoulders and pushed me on before him, assisting my progress very materially by frequent applications of his knee to my person. He took me out into the yard, and out of hearing of the people in the church, and then opened a door which led into a little damp, mouldy stone room, to which we had to descend five or six steps. Here he proceeded to avenge himself of my obstinacy. He sat down upon a stone ledge in the wall, where some old confessor had very likely sat some centuries before, to hear the story of some penitent who wanted absolution for stealing a pick-axe, or for some equally heinous offence. The only difference between my case and that of the penitent was, that, doubtless, he had to pay seven shillings and sixpence for his absolution from the confessor, whereas I got mine from the beadle for nothing. O, he was a great fat man, that beadle! I think I see him now, sitting on that stone ledge, all panting and perspiring with righteous indignation, his great plush waistcoat rising and falling with his deep emotion, and his double chin almost pallid with rage. He had his white wand of office with him, with its gilt top, and he grasped me by one hand, and this wand in the other. I was only a little fellow of about seven years old, with a little frock and belt on, and a pair of very diminutive white trousers, which came down to my knees and showed a very red and chubby bare leg below the frills which skirted their edges. But little as I was, I had the spirit of a little tiger, and seizing the long stick, I snapped it through the middle. My opponent, however, was too big for the struggle to be a very long one. He soon got both my little wrists clasped together behind my back in one of his great ugly hands, and clutched me tight between his huge gouty knees, so that I could not move; he bent me down with my head under his arm, and laid the broken end of his white stick across my back and ribs, till I shrieked again for mercy. He did not let me go till he had beaten me most cruelly; and I never see a beadle to this day but I long to kick his shins and be revenged upon him.

I really did not mean to be betrayed into the relation of this incident in my own personal experience, which, by the bye, has nothing on earth to do with the subject before us, but it all rose out of the white-and-gilt stick, and I did not know where I was till I found myself in the middle of it.

“Silence in Court!” How often is that silence the prelude to the wail of a broken heart, or to the cry of the orphaned child. The trial has lasted many weary hours—yesterday, and to-day, has that grey head been bent forward over the dock, to catch the answers of the witnesses; and, hour by hour, has the blood-shot eye been strained to scrutinize the faces of the jury as they sit within their pew. Grave men, with gowns and wigs, and pompous voices, have been talking glibly about the “prisoner at the bar;” and often has the ermined judge, upon the bench, yawned in uneasy restlessness. But there is one pale looker-on who has never yawned, and whose frightful, greedy interest has never once relaxed. Dry documents and parchments have been read in humdrum tones by the clerk, but still that bright dilated eye has never drooped, those dry and parted lips have never moved. Each word has been drunk in with greedy appetite. Sometimes it has been gulped like nectar down the burning throat of the thirsty traveller, at others it has been swallowed like forked fire, just in proportion as the evidence has told for or against her poor old father in the dock—for this is his daughter sitting amongst the crowd in the gallery. She wants no policeman with a wand to keep her quiet; her’s is the deathlike agony of suspense, when even the heart is afraid to beat, and the quick returning breath disturbs with its own whispers. The judge has closed his summing up, and the jury have gone out, and all is clamour and buzz throughout the court. One fellow, sitting near the spell-bound girl, offers to lay heavy odds that the old chap will get transported; another roysteringly states it as his opinion that the old blade is no better than he should be, from which it is to be inferred, of course, that the gentleman who makes the remark is a great deal better than he need be, and has a superabundance of piety perfectly divine. Heartless and unfeeling jokes are cut by empty-headed and hollow-hearted spectators, and lank-jawed, lantern-faced barristers suck oranges and read the papers. Perhaps there is but one poor fluttering fevered heart, in all that crowded court, that is swollen almost to bursting; but God only knows the agony of suspense and anguish that is centred here in this poor girl’s bosom. Hark! the door is opened, and the jury, one by one, come trooping into court. The foreman looks portentous and important; but

his face gives no clue to what is on his lips. "Silence in Court!" "Gentlemen, are you all agreed upon your verdict?" "We are." "How say you, gentlemen, do you find the prisoner guilty, or not guilty?" "Guilty!" What! nothing more? No relenting plea for mercy, on the ground of poverty, or hunger, or the sore temptation? O, Mr. Foreman, if poverty or want will not plead as an excuse, for pity's sake look here at this wild face; it might surely plead for mercy! No. "Guilty" is the verdict, and nothing more. The judge has but a few words to say, and they finish up with the words "beyond the seas for the term of your natural life!" O, what a wail of deep despair bursts from the daughter's frantic lips as she sees the hoary hairs of her lost father vanish, like the setting sun of hope, for ever from her view! Farewell the glowing fireside of home, with all its little joys and sunbeams! Farewell the happy, happy hours when they shared the crust of poverty together! and when these raven tresses, and those silver locks were intertwined together, as she pillowed her head upon her father's shoulder! Farewell the days and nights of honest toil, when all their hearts' desire was to hunger and thirst, and live and die together! This was the burden of that piercing cry that burst from her broken heart, as ruin and dishonour stared her in the face, left friendless, homeless in the cold and cruel world. "Silence in the Court! Take that woman out!" This little sketch—not very far from nature, I fear—may help to pave the way for the spiritual use which in the rest of this afternoon's remarks I shall try to make of the subject.

When the following sentences were uttered, they were founded on the words, "There was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour," and in transferring our silent court from earth to heaven, I must ask you to try and keep these words in mind.

The interpretations which have been put upon the precise significance of the seven seals, and the seven vials of apocalyptic vision, are so various and discordant, that we do not propose to venture to attempt to unravel that which has perplexed wise and learned men in all time. But, although these words occur in immediate connection with the opening of one of the seals, there is enough that is suggestive in the words themselves, apart from their association, to arrest our minds for a few minutes this afternoon, by appealing to our imagination and our hearts.

It is almost impossible for us, with our small capacity and earthly notions, to derive any definite conceptions of heaven. We know nothing, so to speak, of its internal economy; whatever we know of it or whatever conception we have of it, is

vague and undefined. When the fancy rests upon it in the abstract, it discerns nothing but a brilliant haze of happiness, but cannot descry the specific sources of its joys, or the springs and centres of its bliss. When it is contemplated through the descriptions which the Scriptures furnish, or through the palpable vision of the Evangelist John, there is presented to the mind's eye a sublime, but physically impossible picture; a magnificent chaos of splendour and wonder; a scene passing like a panorama before the view, in which rivers, trees, streets of gold, choirs of angels, thrones, crowns, and altars glide in gorgeous majesty before us, and leave us to string these brilliant emblems into a spiritual reality in our own minds, and wait for any definite idea of the true fact, until we ourselves have passed through the "everlasting doors," and the King of Glory has come in.

But if there is one notion which, more prominently than another, pervades all our inadequate conceptions of the glories of heaven, it is the notion of rest and of repose. Still, even this demands definition at our hands. We all know what we, in an earthly sense, understand by rest; but the repose enjoyed in a celestial acceptance of the term is far different from this. It does not imply an eternal sleep, or a voluptuous doze upon the sloping bank of the river of life, with the zephyrs gently fanning our forehead, and the crystal ripples murmuring at our feet. It does not imply that lazy languor, or that dreamy torpor which *we* understand here by rest or repose. It does not imply cessation from active employment, or a slothful and effeminate paralysis of energy and of zeal. Such may, indeed, be *our* ideas of *earthly* rest. Such may convey the notion of repose to him who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow. But the repose of heaven is to be found in an unwearying activity, a perpetual circling and clustering of ransomed hosts, resplendent with the brightness of the perfect day, around the starry throne of God, an eternal anthem of lofty and augmenting praise, swelling through the archives of the skies, gathering fresh zest and ecstasy with revolving ages; and deepening in melody and developing in power through the cycles of eternity. Such is the "rest that remaineth for the people of God," such the repose which is in reversion for the saints, such is the peace that passeth understanding.

This repose, then, arises not from the necessities of a jaded frame, or the requirements of an enfeebled or overwrought mind, but it arises from the joy consequent upon forgiven sin, and the presence of a smiling Saviour, and it consists in the utter and

entire absence of any painful surprise, of any anxious suspense, or of any liability to outward or internal shocks.

The idea, therefore, of silence in heaven is novel and startling. We might amuse ourselves by speculating upon the causes which could conduce to arrest the rolling numbers of the minstrel choir, but it would be little else than amusement. If "there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," there is surely a corresponding sorrow, of a certain kind, at the sight of stubborn impenitence and sin. We are told, and, for aught I know, truly enough, by some, that each has his guardian angel watching over him. Now, if this be so, we may easily imagine that shining one whose eye is tracing us through all our mazy course, bursting forth into a louder note of ecstasy as often as he sees us on our bended knees within the chamber with our Father who heareth in secret, or when he beholds us animated by love to God, showing in deeds of sympathy our love to man; and, on the other hand, we may fancy his angel fingers pausing in the strain, and the lyre almost dropping from his hand, as he sees us blindly rushing into sin, and heedlessly juggling with destruction.

But while it is easy to goad on the fancy with airy conceits like these, it is difficult to account for the simultaneous suspension, throughout the entire heaven, of the song, the harp, and of the trumpet.

If we were to tarry for a moment to attempt to adduce probable causes for such a phenomenon as total silence in heaven, we would remind you that there is not only *praise*, but *adoration* reigning there; and while the former loves to emulate the loudest and the sweetest singer, and longs to strike the noblest and most triumphant chord in honour of the great Redeemer, the latter keeps an anxious and a watchful eye upon the visage of the King as He sits enthroned in His beauty, so as, if possible, to read the workings of His mind in the changing glances of His face. If, as we may well suppose, great and important preliminaries were being adjusted before the holding of the great assize, and the final winding-up of the affairs of time, the face of the Great Emmanuel, so soon to look upon the travail of His soul, would doubtless express the gathering emotions of His heart. The opening of the seventh seal, in the prophet's vision, removed one more, and almost the last great barrier to the completion of His kingdom, and as the Mighty Potentate assumes the sceptre and prepares to ride forth to judgment, the *adoring angels* at His feet, and gazing intently on His face, behold a look of triumph seated on His brow which makes them turn a warning look to the *praising angels* round

about Him, and as they mutely lay their finger on their parted lips, the choristers obey the hint, the last note of the songs of ages vibrates on the ear, and, for the second time since the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy, there is silence in the court of heaven.

These are but speculations founded on a dream, visions built upon a vision, and, therefore, are perhaps but idle. But, dismissing these attempts to account for so wondrous a conception as a tongue-tied heaven, surely the realisation of such a prospect as spell-bound angels, must be enough to hold us spell-bound too.

But whether we are to regard this as simply another of the emblems of the Evangelist's enraptured trance, or whether it is intended as a prediction of a true reality, we cannot but think that we are justified in supposing that there was silence in heaven when the Great Redeemer died. What could be more calculated to produce a suspension of the song than the absence of the Lord, who was the centre and the theme of all its notes! what more likely to change the jocund hallelujah into a lamentation, than the sight of all the sufferings and sorrows of the Lamb! How could it be otherwise than that the anthem should lose its zest and triumph while the sympathetic host looked down upon Gethsemane, and saw the soil stained with the sweat drops of the Saviour's agony, and heard the deep drawn groan mingle with the rustle of the leaf and the sighing of the breeze, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" And how could it be otherwise than a signal for a solemn hush in the immortal strain, when, from the crest of Calvary, the dying cry arose, "It is finished!" Yes, my friends, there was silence in heaven when the veil of the temple was rent in twain; the seraph anthem gave place to the thunder-peal of awe; the sun, which smiled in unshorn brightness in the morning, turned to blood, and draped itself in sackcloth by the noon; and while on earth the rocks were rending, and the sky was blackening; while in hell the muttered curse and the stifled moan hung suspended on the lip, there was silence in the court of heaven. It was the silence of wonder. It was amazement at the mighty consummation, and the tremendous stoop of His big compassion, that enchained the banded choir of Heaven in deep and awful silence. If this is how the spectacle was gazed upon by those in heaven, how ought you and I to contemplate it, for whom the scene was enacted? Christian! how did you gaze upon the Lamb of God, when first the Spirit brought you to His cross? Was there not a solemn hush of awe thrilling your inmost soul,

as you looked upon the scene of suffering, and felt that it was *your* sins had bruised Him, and *your* iniquities had wounded Him?

And, sinner, can you look upon the Man of Sorrows without your spirit being moved to reverential silence? We have thrown out a fanciful conceit about a guardian angel losing, as it were, his place in the angelic anthem, and being startled into silence by the coldness of him over whom he watched. This may be but an airy and unreal notion; but supposing it to be true, O, how broken would be the song the good spirit would sing who keeps his eye on some of us, and tries to spread his tutelary wings for our defence! Let us beware how we mar the harmony of heaven by the fantastic tricks we play beneath it!

But if there was silence in heaven when the sacrifice was offered, and if that silence is to be renewed at the great crisis of the final judgment, there will be rapture ineffable, when the ransom is complete.

"There was silence in Heaven for the space of half-an-hour." If this be true in reality of what is to come on the great trying day, what interval would be more appropriate for such a silence than the time when the grim procession of the damned, having received the final anathema of Him whose blood they trampled underfoot, are being escorted by the fallen angels to that dread abode where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched? O, yes, then must be the time that the silence of heaven succeeds! and through the dreadful stillness of that tremendous interval, the dull and muffled wail of those who have just been banished from before the dread tribunal, shall float up dimly on the sighing wind, as they taste the first mortal anguish of the second death. My fellow sinner, tell me, shall it be that *your* voice shall be heard breaking on the stillness of that half-hour? shall it be that you will form one of that doomed procession who shall be led, in deep despair to bottomless perdition? shall it be that the undying worm shall prey upon the vitals of *your* soul, and wring from you the agonizing cry, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved?" O, God forbid! But it *will* be so if you do not come to the cross *now*; it *will* be so, if you do not appreciate the *smile* of Christ, you must feel his frown. By all the solemn and stupendous emphasis of that awful interval, by all the untold horrors of the outer darkness, by all the ineffable glories of the perfect day, by the hideous despair of the hellish laughter of the demon host, by the mellifluous symphonies of the songs of the church of the first-born, by the hopeless slavery of hell, and by the thrice blessed and ecstatic liberty of heaven

I entreat you to "*Kiss now* the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little!" But on the lapse of that dread silence, the Judge will change His frowning aspect, and will turn to look upon the travail of His soul. The poor publican who cried "God be merciful to me a sinner!" stands at His right hand; the thief who was crucified at His side is there. Not only are Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and Noah, and Isaiah, and Paul, and Peter, and John, and all the great illustrious champions of the cross in all ages there; but the humble pastor of the village church, the Sunday scholar, and the Sunday teacher, the pious parent, and the pious child, the faithful deacon, the obscure peasant, and every man, woman, or child, who has brought, in its simplicity, a broken and a contrite heart. The Good Samaritan will find his deed of mercy not forgotten; the cup of cold water will be then acknowledged; and the widow's mite will be accepted, with the smiling benediction, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

The Book of Life is opened, and the faithful hear their names repeated; the book of God's remembrance has no sin, no single accusation enrolled against them, for they have accepted the atonement, and every evil deed is blotted out in the blood of the Lamb. They stand before the judgment seat of Christ and hear him say to each and all, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." And then the anthem, never again to cease, breaks forth, and the redeemed join in the song, "Blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." O, my friends! let us seek to be amongst the number. Contrast the difference between the lot of the cursed and the saved. It is a glorious and stupendous honour for a sinful, erring worm, to become a priest and a king to God, but it is an honour available for all who will but take it.

Come, then, my brother, come *now* to Christ while you *may*, and then you need not tremble to approach Him when you *must*. Fling away every sin, every weight, and the sin which most easily besets you, fear neither men nor devils, never be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. Accept the sacrifice, and help, by partaking in the ransom, to swell the rapture. Don't put it off till to-morrow, but come to Jesus *now*; you can't have too much

of His society, and it will not be long ere you may be summoned to appear before Him. Call up before your fancy the scene of the great and final judgment; stimulate your horror and your fear by a glance at the trembling culprits on His left; lash your anticipations into ecstasy as you dwell upon the bliss and brightness on His right.

“Great God, what do I see and hear!
 The end of things created!
 The Judge of mankind doth appear
 On clouds of glory seated!
 The trumpet sounds—the graves restore
 The dead which they contained before;
 Prepare, my soul, to meet him!”

“Lo, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him—they also who pierced Him—and all nations shall wail because of Him. Even so—come Lord Jesus.”

Behold yon streak of orient morning fringing the summit of yonder hill with amber and gold. Listen to that far distant echo that proclaims the advent of His chariot wheels. Ye mists and vapours of the earth, that would obscure the sight and shut out the sound—give way! Ye rising barriers, that beset the road and retard his approach—break down! Ye flimsy shadows of the night, that postpone the day-dawn of His appearing—disperse! Ye doubts and dangers, phantasies, and fears, that veil the glorious prospect from my sight—depart, begone, with all that hides me from my coming Lord!

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